



JOURNEY
THROUGH

MARK





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DEVELOPED BY

Assemblies of God
National Men's Ministries

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The Journey Begins

The lessons you're about to engage are meant to help strengthen your biblical knowledge, understanding, and application. In addition to what the Bible says, studying the culture, land, language, and other background information will produce a broader and deeper understanding of what Scripture is saying to you. These lessons are intended to help provide that for you.

The format is built on the following five questions that will help you explore the biblical author's intent, your perspective as a modern reader, and how the Holy Spirit can apply it to you. In order to gain a fuller understanding of Scripture, you should ask: What did this Scripture mean to the original author and audience?

1. What did this Scripture mean to the original author and audience?
2. What does this Scripture mean to me today?
3. How can this Scripture apply to my life?
4. How does this Scripture deepen my love for God?
5. How can I demonstrate this Scripture to my family and those around me?

Using these questions, every lesson contains four sections: The Author's Lens, My Lens, The Holy Spirit's Lens, and Upward and Outward Focus. These sections will encourage you to wrestle with the text and discover an understanding that will deepen your biblical knowledge and allow you to rightly apply what you've learned.

These lessons have been written using several resources to provide you with an in-depth study without having to purchase every single resource. However, there are a few recommended tools for purchase that will enhance your engagement:

- *Fire Bible®: English Standard Version®*
- Journal
- Colored Pencils
- Fine Point Pen

The ultimate goal is to equip you to discern what the Holy Spirit and God's Word is saying to you. To do that, it's recommended that you work slowly and methodically through this deep dive into the Scriptures.



For Group Leaders

If you intend to use this material in a group format, below are some tips to help you better utilize these lessons in that setting.

- Determine who will be the group leader. The leader will be responsible for making any copies needed, coordinating meeting times, and facilitating discussions.
- The group leader should select individuals to read aloud The Author's Lens and My Lens sections.
- Before a session begins, the group leader should read through the questions in The Holy Spirit's Lens section. Many lessons have more content than can be covered in one session, so the leader may choose to only engage part of the questions or assign group members to work through some or all of the questions before arrival.
- If your group is very large, dividing into groups of three or four people is the best way to work through selected questions from The Holy Spirit's Lens for thirty to forty minutes. These groups should also commit to work together throughout the week.
- If you've divided into smaller groups, rejoin the entire group together after the small group time. Discuss as a large group a few of the selected questions from The Holy Spirit's Lens for ten to fifteen minutes.
- Finally, the leader is responsible to hold group members accountable for completing the Scripture reading before each session and ensuring that they are writing in their journals.



Lesson and Scripture Checklist

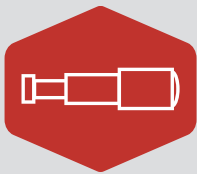
- Lesson 1: Introduction
- Lesson 2: Mark 1:1-8
- Lesson 3: Mark 1:9-11
- Lesson 4: Mark 1:12-13
- Lesson 5: Mark 1:14-20
- Lesson 6: Mark 1: 21-28
- Lesson 7: Mark 1:29-39
- Lesson 8: Mark 1:40-45
- Lesson 9: Mark 2:1-12
- Lesson 10: Mark 2:13-17
- Lesson 11: Mark 2:12-22
- Lesson 12: Mark 2:23-3:6
- Lesson 13: Mark 3:7-19
- Lesson 14: Mark 3:20-35
- Lesson 15: Mark 4:1-20
- Lesson 16: Mark 4:26-34
- Lesson 17: Mark 4:35-41
- Lesson 18: Mark 5:1-20
- Lesson 19: Mark 5:21-43
- Lesson 20: Mark 6:1-6
- Lesson 21: Mark 6:6-13
- Lesson 22: Mark 6:14-29
- Lesson 23: Mark 6:30-44
- Lesson 24: Mark 6:45-56
- Lesson 25: Mark 7:1-23
- Lesson 26: Mark 7:24-30
- Lesson 27: Mark 7:31-37
- Lesson 28: Mark 8:1-21
- Lesson 29: Mark 8:22-33
- Lesson 30: Mark 8:34-38
- Lesson 31: Mark 9:1-13
- Lesson 32: Mark 9:14-29

Lesson and Scripture Checklist continued

- Lesson 33: Mark 9:30-41
- Lesson 34: Mark 9:42-50
- Lesson 35: Mark 10:1-12
- Lesson 36: Mark 10:13-16
- Lesson 37: Mark 10:17-22
- Lesson 38: Mark 10:23-31
- Lesson 39: Mark 10: 32-45
- Lesson 40: Mark 10:46-52
- Lesson 41: Mark 11:1-11
- Lesson 42: Mark 11:12-19
- Lesson 43: Mark 11:20-26
- Lesson 44: Mark 11:27-12:12
- Lesson 45: Mark 12:13-17
- Lesson 46: Mark 12:18-27
- Lesson 47: Mark 12:28-34
- Lesson 48: Mark 12:35-37
- Lesson 49: Mark 12:38-44
- Lesson 50: Mark 13:1-13
- Lesson 51: Mark 13:14-23
- Lesson 52: Mark 13:24-27
- Lesson 53: Mark 13:28-37
- Lesson 54: Mark 14:1-9
- Lesson 55: Mark 14:10-26
- Lesson 56: Mark 14:26-31
- Lesson 57: Mark 14:32-42
- Lesson 58: Mark 14:43-52
- Lesson 59: Mark 14:53-65
- Lesson 60: Mark 14:66-72
- Lesson 61: Mark 15:1-20
- Lesson 62: Mark 15:21-41
- Lesson 63: Mark 15:42-47
- Lesson 64: Mark 16:1-18
- Lesson 65: Mark 16:19-20



Lesson 1: Introduction



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

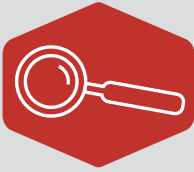
As you begin this study, background knowledge is helpful. Please read the points below. Consider the following synopsis from the *Fire Bible*^{®1}

- Author: Mark
- Theme: Jesus: Miracle Worker, Suffering Servant, and Son of God. A related theme is the failure of the disciples.²
- Date of Writing: AD 55–65
- Background: Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels. He grew up in Jerusalem. His mother's house had served as a meeting place for early believers, and he was among the first-generation Christians. According to historians, most of Mark's information for his Gospel came from Peter. Mark wrote his narrative in Rome and his focus was on communicating with the Roman Christians.
- Purpose: Christians in Rome were facing great persecution. Perhaps the purpose of Mark was to recount the life of Jesus to strengthen and encourage faith in Jesus' followers in Rome and inspire courage for those who were suffering for their faith.
- Survey: Mark's writing focuses on both Jesus' humanity and His divinity. The first half of Mark focuses primarily on Jesus' powerful miracles and on His authority over sickness and demons as signs that God's kingdom was near. The climax of Mark is an episode in Caesarea Philippi, followed by the transfiguration.

¹ Donald C. Stamps, *Fire Bible®: English Standard Version*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2011), 1598–1599.

² Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 127.

- To familiarize yourself with the geography of Mark:
 - » Familiarize yourself with Maps number 11,12, and 16 in the back of your *Fire Bible*®.
 - » You may want to reference pages 114–121 of the *Essential Atlas of the Bible*.
- Write down thoughts or questions you would like to answer as you study this book.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

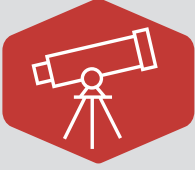
How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

- Highlight and write down the following in your journal as you read through Mark:
 - » Recurring words
 - » Places mentioned
 - » Names mentioned

- Circle the following words with the recommended colored pencils:
 - » “Immediately” in yellow
 - » “Miracle” or “Sign” in red
 - » “Worry” in orange
 - » “Jesus Touching People” in blue

- Look over your notes for Mark, and write down three things you hope to learn and apply to your life as a result of this study.

- What thoughts came to mind as you read Mark this week?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- How can the study of the Gospel of Mark help you deepen your love of God?

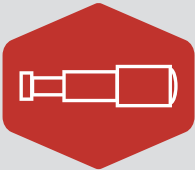
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Lesson 2: Mark 1:1–8 The Good News

Main Idea: This lesson explains the role of John the Baptist in validating Jesus’ ministry to Mark’s readers and the meaning of the gospel John preached.

Scripture: Mark 1:1–8



The Author’s Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God’s Word.

Sometime near the execution of the apostle Paul, Mark set out to write about Jesus Christ for the people of Rome. Jesus’ genealogy would mean little to the people of Rome. Mark surmised that to the people of Rome, not even the birth of Christ would validate His ministry. In Mark’s twelve-word introduction, Mark promises a book that moves in historical rhythm with the kingdom of God, sounds the “Good News” of redemptive grace, identifies Jesus with all who serve, claims salvation through the suffering of the Christ, and promises the life and power of the Son of God as our ever-present hope.¹

Mark begins his writing by uniting Christ with the work of a well-known, contemporary prophet named John the Baptist. Mark was going to validate the ministry of Christ by highlighting the life of the John who would herald the coming of Christ. John, who was born in a small village hundreds of miles across the sea from Rome and who never preached outside the confines of Galilee, Perea, and Judea, nevertheless had an incredible reputation throughout the Roman Empire.

¹ David L. McKenna and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Mark*, vol. 25, The Preacher’s Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1982), 25–26.

Mark uses the word *gospel* eight times which is more than any other Gospel writer. When we hear the word gospel or good news, we assume we know what Mark means. However, when the people of Mark's day heard these words, it meant something different.

In 9 BC, Caesar Augustus was ruling the known world. He was the first of emperors to really call himself a deity (god). When people of this day would hear the *gospel*, they would hear, "We have a new king, new era, and new period." Mark uses the meaning of the word *gospel* to share with his readers that the good news of Jesus is exactly that. There is a new King, and this is a new era. This would have been powerful to the oppressed listeners of that day, as Rome was so brutal. The readers from that day would have understood that Mark was saying we have a new King, and that He is inviting us to enter a "new time, new season, new hope, and new reign."

The messenger, John, is challenging the people to prepare their hearts to meet their new King. John was in the wilderness. The wilderness is an uninhabited place. The wilderness stretched about seventy-five miles north and south, but only about ten miles east and west, between the hill country of Judea and the Jordan Valley.² People were coming to John and John diverts their attention from himself onto the new King. The people of Mark's day would have remembered that the wilderness was a place to meet God. They would have remembered this was the place where Moses met God in the burning bush and where Jacob wrestled with God. The wilderness reminded them that God calls people to a place of total dependence on Him.

² Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 129.

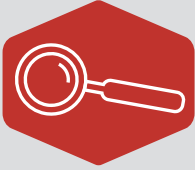


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Just as John paved the way for Jesus to touch His world, we are called to pave the way for Jesus to touch our world. John was not obnoxious, but he was different. He did not need what the world had to offer because the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. Mark considered John's endorsement of Jesus to be of such importance that it would validate the rest of his book. Lessons to consider from John for us today:

- Like John, Christ followers must have a sense of history.
- Like John, Christ followers must be self-sacrificing.
- Like John, Christ followers must maintain humility no matter your status.
- Like John, Christ followers point to Jesus as the One who can take the old and make it new.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

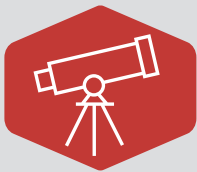
How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- Why do you think it is important to speak to people on their level and to their hearts?
- Describe your life prior to Jesus and how your life with Jesus is today.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you thought most about this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 1:4. What are three things you can glean about the baptism of repentance?

- Mark 1:5. Describe Israel's spiritual climate.

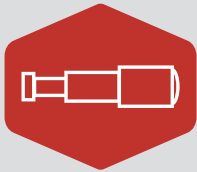
- Mark 1:8. Who baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit?



Lesson 3: Mark 1:9–11 Jesus' Baptism

Main Idea: By studying the baptism of Jesus, you will take a closer look at what baptism means in the life of every believer.

Scripture: Mark 1:9–11



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Jesus waited for God's plan to unfold and become obvious. Jesus was raised in the small town of Nazareth by godly parents. It was in Nazareth that Jesus grew spiritually, intellectually, physically, and emotionally (Luke 2:40,52). Old Testament prophecies spoke of one who would precede Christ, which was John the Baptist, as was shown in the previous lesson. Jesus marked His time until it was God's time. When it was God's time, Jesus stepped out of obscurity to begin His ministry.

The word *baptized* is used eighty-one times in the New Testament. Each time the word is used, it means to totally and completely be submerged or immersed. The purpose of water baptism is to provide a physical picture of a spiritual reality (Mark 1:5). In John 1, before Jesus is baptized, He is walking along the Jordan. John sees Jesus, stops baptizing, and points to Him saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Matthew 3:14 adds that John would have tried to talk Jesus out of being baptized, to which Jesus responded, ". . . it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." "All righteousness" is a reference to God's plan and purpose for Jesus. Part of that

plan was the complete identification of Jesus at the very outset of his ministry with man and his sin.¹ Ultimately, Jesus fulfilled righteousness by dying on the cross. To John, Jesus was saying that His baptism would be a symbolic illustration of what He would go through on the cross. Baptism is connected to His death on the cross and His resurrection (Luke 12:50). Furthermore, by being baptized, Jesus was fulfilling the requirements of becoming a high priest in Israel, first established in Exodus 29:4 when Aaron and his sons were anointed to serve as priests in the tabernacle. They were first washed with water, signifying their complete sanctification, or cleansing from sin. Water baptism does not save a person, but it is an outward sign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in one's inner life.

When Jesus comes out of the water, Mark uses the word *immediately* to describe what happened next. This is the first of forty-seven times that Mark uses the word in his gospel. Mark informs his readers that there is a connection Jesus has with the Father. Also, Mark wants his readers to know that power that has come upon Jesus and that the Father is pleased with His Son. Scholars think that the voice here refers to a couple of Scriptures from the Old Testament. First Psalm 2:7 which applies to the Messiah. Second, is Genesis 22:2 which is about Abraham sacrificing his beloved son.²

1 Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 621.

2 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 130.

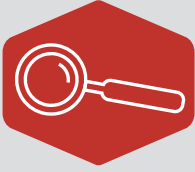


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Baptism is one of the most basic Christian ordinances. It is not just a ritual, but symbolizes the powerful reality of the new life a believer has received through Christ. A believer is not baptized to check off a spiritual list or endow spiritual pedigree. However, the power and presence of the Lord comes into the life of a child of God at the point of their obedience to Him. The more a believer obeys Christ, the more they can experience His presence, His power, His deliverance, and His working in our life. Some lessons to learn:

- When a Christ follower is baptized, they belong to God which provides a sense of identity.
- When a Christ follower is baptized, they are loved by God which provides a sense of security.
- When a Christ follower is baptized, they are praised by God which provides encouragement for the future.
- When a Christ follower is baptized, it is a physical picture of a spiritual reality.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

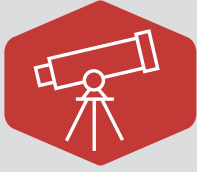
- Read the following verses and write down what happens to a believer when they accept Christ as their Savior:
 - » Galatians 2:20

 - » Romans 6:3

 - » Colossians 2:12

 - » 1 Corinthians 10:1-2

- Describe your baptism experience and what it meant to you.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

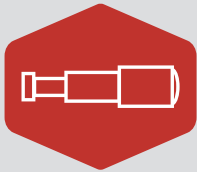
- Mark 1:11. What are three things you gleaned about the Trinity?



Lesson 4: Mark 1:12-13 Into the Wild

Main Idea: This lesson looks at the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness and offers encouragement for your own wilderness experiences.

Scripture: Mark 1:12-13



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Matthew writes eleven verses (Matthew 4:1-11) and Luke writes thirteen verses (Luke 4:1-13) about the three different temptations Jesus faced. Mark writes only two verses about this, yet it appears that he saw a facet of Jesus' temptation the other writers did not see. He saw the temptation as an initial event in the lifelong struggle Jesus had with Satan. Matthew and Luke use the word *devil*, and Mark uses the word *Satan*, which are among the words used throughout Scripture to portray the evil one:

- Satan: the adversary or enemy of our souls.
- Devil: the one who slanders, and spreads lies about believers and decries our righteousness.
- Evil Power: the power that works against God and Christ.

Mark tells us Jesus came up out of the water, saw heaven opened, received the anointing of the Holy Spirit and without any time lapse, was immediately driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. Mark seems to place

special emphasis on the wilderness in his description of Jesus' temptation. In fact, the word *wilderness* appears fourteen times in the first thirteen verses of Mark and twice in the temptation account. Craig Keeners asserts, "Many believed that demons were especially attracted to places like pagan temples, bathhouses, graveyards and deserts. Readers would sense the suspense as Jesus battled with Satan on Satan's own turf."¹

Mark states the Spirit *drove* Jesus, a strong word. *Drove* means to eject, throw, or hurl. It is the idea that the Spirit of God is putting Jesus in the wilderness. In contrast, Matthew and Luke give the idea that Jesus was led into the wilderness. But according to Mark, Jesus had a strong inner compulsion that if He wanted to stay in the will of the Father, He had to go into the wilderness. Mark points out the physical and spiritual side of battles. Jesus was driven into the wilderness as a test of His submission.

In the wilderness, Mark sees the confrontation with Satan as the important aspect of the temptation. He sees this confrontation as the beginning of the battle which culminates at the cross. Facing temptation strengthened Jesus' mind, heart, and soul.

Mark also helps the reader understand that the wilderness is a place of divine provision. The wilderness for Mark was desolate, lonely, hostile, and dangerous. In the wilderness, Jesus was in a fight for His life. Mark reminds the reader that when needed, God can use any means, earthly or heavenly, to bring any supplies needed to aid and comfort a believer who is in warfare with Satan.

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 130.

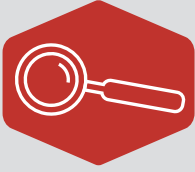


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Reading this passage in Mark helps answer some questions believers may have regarding their own wilderness experiences. Believers will be tempted and tried. In fact, it seems the closer to God one is drawn, the more difficult the trials one faces. A believer's greatest experiences with God are often followed by their most grievous trials. Consider these potential lessons from this passage:

- A believer's inner resources for survival and creativity are tested when they are all alone and tempted by the devil.
- A believer's physical condition combined with emotional swings, and a hostile environment can elevate the dread of loneliness.
- A believer's unbroken communion with God is heightened in the midst of temptation.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

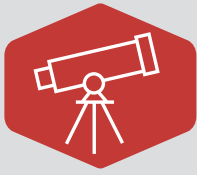


- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe a time in your life when you felt as if you were in a wilderness. What lessons did you learn?

- What temptations have you faced in your wilderness?

- How did you handle facing your temptations?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

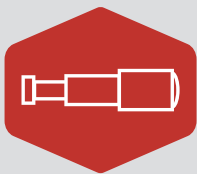
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 5: Mark 1:14–20 Jesus Picks His Team

Main Idea: This lesson details the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee and what it means to be called to follow Him.

Scripture: Mark 1:14–20



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Several months have now elapsed since Jesus' temptation, and with this passage Mark continues the story by telling how Jesus chooses who will be on His team. Up to this point, the ministry of Jesus has been in Judea. Now Mark is signaling that something has changed. Jesus began His ministry right after His baptism and temptation were completed. He had all the necessary preparation. Over the following months, John the Baptist was arrested and put in prison by Herod, never to be released. So, Jesus began His ministry at a time of crisis. Jesus is now entering Galilee to proclaim the Gospel and pick His team.

Mark helps his readers to know that Jesus is preaching the good news about God's truth as He travels around Galilee. Jesus came to deliver what God had promised through the centuries. He came to make good on the promises of God and usher in the kingdom of God. Jesus' kingship is both a present reality (God is exercising his authority now) and a future hope (God will reign in the

eschaton—the End—when he finally puts down all opposition to his reign).¹ Mark tells his readers the “time is fulfilled.” Time here is not simply chronological time (*chronos*) but the decisive time (*kairos*) for God’s action.² Mark is saying that God’s redemptive plan is now ushering in a new era. Part of the urgency of Jesus’ ministry is that God is working in a new way. He is calling out to people in a new way, and He will redeem in a new way. Mark declares that everything his hearers have read about and heard is being fulfilled and being established. This is not accomplished by political or military means but by the rule and reign of Christ in the hearts of those who put their trust in Him.

As Jesus walks along the shoreline of Galilee, He is walking around harbors and the hubs of commercial fishing. He sees four men and picks them to be on His team. Jesus is going to take them on a journey. He enters their life and story to help shape them for a different destiny. Craig Keener provides insight into the calling of the disciples from Jesus. He states, “Disciples usually sought out their own teachers. Only the most radical teacher called their own disciples. Because discipleship sometimes involved temporarily laying aside one’s livelihood and being apart from one’s wife and children for a time, the decision to choose a teacher would have normally been made only after much deliberation.”³

1 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 624.

2 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 624.

3 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 130.

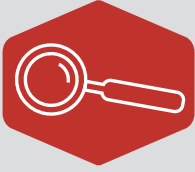


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

God's message for people is a message of good news. The key to receiving God's message is to receive the divine messenger. Jesus calls for a response from everyone who hears Him. The Gospel demands a response. Consider the following two words: repent and believe. To repent is to turn away from sin. To believe is to give credence to the Gospel based on the inward conviction that what God has said is true. Lessons to consider from this passage:

- Jesus offers Good News that is timely.
- Jesus provides Good News within the reach of people.
- Jesus affirmed the message of the Good News is to make a decisive decision to repent.
- Jesus articulates that the Good News is assuring.
- Jesus' call to discipleship is always personal.
- Jesus call to discipleship is to teachable people.
- Jesus' call to discipleship is a test of trust.
- Jesus' call to discipleship is task-oriented.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

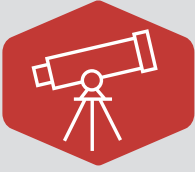
How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- Describe your response to the call from Jesus to follow Him.
- Identify one or two things you can do in the next ninety days to improve your walk with Jesus.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 1:15. What did God want to do through Israel in relation to the Kingdom?

- Mark 1:15. What are three aspects that are active and present on the earth?

- Mark 1:15. How does God reveal His kingdom today?

- Mark 1:17. What should be the first task of a person who wants to be a disciple of Christ?

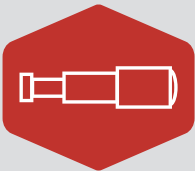
- Mark 1:17. What must a disciple of Christ learn to do?



Lesson 6: Mark 1:21–28 Keep Your Eyes on the One Who Makes Demons Tremble

Main Idea: By studying Jesus' interaction with a man in the Capernaum synagogue, you will learn about the reality of the invisible spirit world and His authority over it.

Scripture: Mark 1:21–28



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

By the time of Mark 1, Jesus has spent about a year of ministry in Judea in the south. He has performed several miracles while there. Jesus travels north to Galilee to his hometown of Nazareth. He preaches in the synagogue, and it so irritates and infuriates the people in his hometown that they try to kill Him. Jesus leaves Nazareth and travels to Capernaum.

From this point forward, Capernaum will function as Jesus' base of operation for His ministry. Capernaum is a prominent town located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It has a population of about ten thousand people and is a wealthy city. The primary industry of this town is the exportation of fish across this region of the Roman Empire. The people and religious leaders are amazed at the ability of Jesus to speak and His understanding of God's Word.

In the Capernaum synagogue, a man comes in who appears to all to be sane and whole. They do not know that anything is brewing in his spirit. But the

teaching of Jesus goes beyond the realm of the cognitive and pierces the man's heart. Jesus confronts the spirit world that no one else in the synagogue can see.

Of all the miracles Mark could have recorded first, he chooses to tell his readers about this demoniac. As background, it is helpful to understand that God created holy angels. Heaven was their home and they served and worshipped God. Through pride and rebellion, a portion of these angels became evil. Their leader was an angel named Lucifer. Lucifer led a rebellion against God, and he and his followers were cast out of heaven and became fallen angels, or demons (Isaiah 14:12-15).

Demons number in the millions. They are eternal creatures who are forever wicked and oppose God. They work to achieve the purposes of Lucifer. They oppress humanity. Their goal is to blind most of the world's population to God's truth. In fact, everyone who is not born again is influenced by demonic power to one degree or another. The world of the demonic is a frightening reality.

Mark uses the words *demon* and *unclean spirit* interchangeably. He uses *unclean spirit* eleven times and *demon* or *demons* thirteen times in his writing. What is fascinating is that Mark differentiates the response between the people and the demons to the authority of Jesus. The people are amazed, but the demons are terrorized. Perhaps this is because the people did not know who Jesus was and the demons did.

Throughout the first eight chapters of Mark, the demons know who Jesus is, but the people, priests, Pharisees, and disciples do not yet know who He is. Craig Keener informs the reader "Ancients often recognized that demons had access to supernatural knowledge: it is not surprising that these demons perceive Jesus' true identity, which the people there still do not recognize."¹ Again Keener shines some light into the methods of expelling demons. He says, "there are two main methods of expelling demons: (1) revolting or scaring the demon out; (2) using magical formulas or invoking the name of a higher spirit to get rid of the lower one. The people are amazed that Jesus can be effective by simply ordering the demons to leave."² Mark is answering the question, "Who is Jesus?"

1 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 131.

2 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 132.



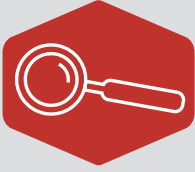
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

The key to understanding this passage is to remember that Jesus is the main character. It is easy for readers to get their focus off Jesus. If not careful, focus can remain on devils, demons, and wayward angels. Alternatively, focus may be on false prophets, workers of evil, ungodliness, or iniquity. One's focus might even be on signs, earthquakes, floods, storms, calendars, datebooks, or timelines.

The focus of a believer should be on our desire to worship Christ. The key to understanding what Mark is trying to teach is the same key that you and I need to make sense of our lives. We must keep our eyes on Jesus. Jesus' teaching clarifies truth which clears our minds of misunderstandings about God, His Word, and His Spirit. In His presence, sin is uncovered, and discernment is given. Look at the some of the lessons you can learn from this passage of Scripture from Mark:

- Not all of the problems we carry are obvious.
- Jesus works by His Spirit to clarify truth, challenge our consciences, and stir our spirits.
- Jesus transcends time to bring solutions to our situations.
- Jesus is the source of authority.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

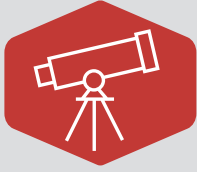
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Without trying to exaggerate or sensationalize the spirit world, on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very real and 4 being not real, how real do you believe demonic activity to be in the world today? Why?

- What steps can you take to make sure you keep your focus on Jesus?

- If the voice of Jesus could shake the spirit world, what can His voice do to the human heart?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

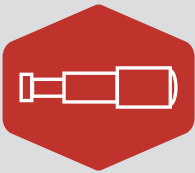
- Mark 1:21. Describe what a synagogue is.



Lesson 7: Mark 1:29–39 Jesus' Gospel Ministry

Main Idea: As you study Jesus' healing of a woman in Capernaum and His surprising choice to stay out of the spotlight, you will better understand the kind of life God offers to you.

Scripture: Mark 1:29–39



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In this section of Mark, the reader is given a micro example of the power of the Gospel in the life of a woman and then a macro example to help us see something in the life of Jesus' ministry. This passage shows the reader an everyday occurrence in the life of Christ and His disciples. In this text, Mark is giving a lesson of applied theology in the Gospel ministry of Jesus. It is as if Mark wants to give a typical day in the life of Jesus, filled with teaching and miracles.

Jesus is now in Capernaum. This story appears in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Mark tells it very matter-of-factly. The men of Capernaum gather in the synagogue to pray, read, and discuss the Scriptures. When the service is over, Jesus travels about two hundred feet from the synagogue to the house of Peter. There Jesus encounters a sick woman, Peter's mother-in-law. She was sick with a fever of unspecified origin. The fever was not seen as a symptom

of something else. Interestingly, Jesus speaks to the fever and not the woman. And when Jesus touched her, Mark tells readers, the fever left. This story happens on a Sabbath, which lasts from Friday night at sundown until Saturday night at sundown. The Sabbath having ended people could now bring, without breaking the law, their sick and demon-possessed to him.¹ As the news of Peter's mother-in-law's healing spreads, many people gather at the gate of the city. Why are the people coming? Everyone who had any kind of problem was carried to the gate and laid there in hopes that Jesus would touch them. Mark leaves the impression that Jesus touched all of them, and before the evening was over, many of those people went home well.

The disciples think that staying in front of the people is the most important thing. They look for Jesus the next morning and He is not where they expect. Jesus had gone away to a quiet, solitary place to pray. Jesus seeks the strength that only communion and fellowship with the Father can provide.² He cannot be pushed into the crowd. They do not understand why Jesus does not want to be center stage. However, His life purpose is linked so tightly to the will of God that He needs to stay in communion with God to stay on track with that purpose. Jesus tells His disciples it is time to move to another place. Mark reminds his readers that His coming into the world was more to proclaim God's Good News and all that was involved in discipleship and suffering than to be a popular miracle-worker.³ Jesus came to publicly proclaim the good news of God's kingdom to as many people as possible.

1 Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 628.

2 Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 629.

3 Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 629.



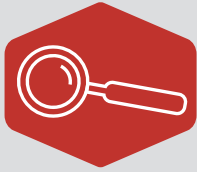
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

We as believers should never take anything God does for granted, but we should always expect God to intervene in our situation. As we learn to walk by the nudges of the Holy Spirit, our lives will be filled with miracles. These miracles will produce faith in others.

Our life's purpose begins and continues at an altar of prayer. Our life should not be driven by the demands of people or our own ambition but should be driven by God's purpose. And God's purpose for us will always include worship, service to others, and evangelism. Consider some of the following lessons:

- Christ should be invited into our home.
- Intercessory prayer is vital for those in our family who need Christ's power.
- We can spread the news that Christ is ready to heal.
- The ministry of a believer should be touching people's lives.
- As a believer, we should pay attention to the nudges of the Holy Spirit in our life.
- As a believer, we should stay prepared spiritually and mentally to respond to the needs of people around us.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

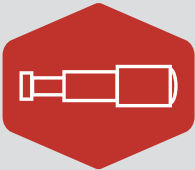
- Mark 1:34. What are some reasons that Jesus does not want someone to tell what He has done for them?



Lesson 8: Mark 1:40–45 Jesus Is Willing

Main Idea: This lesson explores Jesus' life-changing interaction with a leper and encourages you to welcome His touch in your life and those around you.

Scripture: Mark 1:40–45



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In ancient times, there was a dreaded class of skin diseases all grouped together under the name leprosy. The disease was considered contagious and deadly. Today, it is believed to have probably been Hansen's disease, causing sores all over the body and the shriveling of limbs. It could cause fingers and toes to fall off as well as organ failure and nerve damage. There were few known survivors, and everyone who contracted the disease was marked for life, segregated from family and friends, and ended up living in extreme poverty. For some, leprosy was considered a curse. Some Jewish teachers blamed the disease on the leper's sin (often the sin of slander).¹ It literally rendered a person untouchable in the minds of people.

Worse than the physical pain of leprosy was the psychological and emotional pain it brought. Mark's audience would have been familiar with Leviticus 13, which describes how lepers were spiritually and physically unclean and outcasts from the community. The law required that "the person with such

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 132.

an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out ‘Unclean! Unclean!’² Lepers would have lived alone. They would have been treated like dead men walking. When Mark begins chapter one, verse 40 with “and a leper came,” the first-century hearer would have snapped to attention.

The leper decides that he will break all the rules and make one brave attempt for help. Jesus does something that no one else would have done: He touches the leper. Leprosy causes loss of feeling and numbness in one’s body. But the moment Jesus touches the leper, he *feels* a touch. Jesus’ touching of the leper not only resulted in his being cured (v. 42) but also revealed Jesus’ attitude toward the ceremonial law. He boldly placed love and compassion over ritual and regulation.³

Jesus breaks all protocol. He reaches through an invisible but strong restraint. Jesus, in the eyes of the people, opens himself up to leprosy. Afterward, Jesus instructs the leper to confirm his healing with the leaders so he can be readmitted to society. Jesus wants the leper to follow a biblical process to show himself clean.

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 630.

³ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 630.

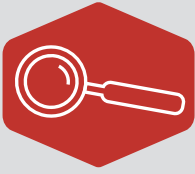


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Some situations in life are so dire that normal, human ways of handling difficult situations just do not fit. During such times, we come face to face with our helplessness. Some situations and people require the kind of help only God can provide. They may be untouchable (un-help-able) to us, but what is impossible for us is completely possible for God. Jesus wants to touch the untouchable. In our text, Jesus says, "I will" to the leper, and his life is forever changed. Here are some lessons we can learn from this process:

- It is sometimes easier to believe in God's power rather than in God's mercy.
- Jesus feels our pain in the most hopeless situation.
- No matter our situation, Jesus is willing to take our place.
- No matter our situation, Jesus will pay the ultimate price.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe a time in your life when you experienced or felt God's compassion.

- Have you ever been so lonely or desperate that you longed for just one positive word to be spoken in your life? How did you feel?

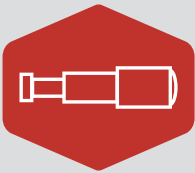
- Ask the Holy Spirit to put someone in your path this week that you can speak words of life to. Then write down the experience.



Lesson 9: Mark 2:1-12 Through the Eyes of Jesus

Main Idea: In this lesson, you'll see how Jesus heals a man after doing something only God can do. You'll also discover how it's possible to be so attached to our own ideas that we miss what God is actually doing.

Scripture: Mark 2:1-12



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In Mark 2, Jesus has returned to Capernaum from Gadara from traveling the Lake of Galilee. News of His arrival causes excitement. Jesus enters a house to rest but is immediately besieged by those who are anxious to touch or be touched by Jesus. The house could probably hold approximately 50 people along with people crowding around the door. A Palestinian peasant's house was usually a small, one-room structure with a flat roof. Access to the roof was by means of an outside stairway. The roof itself was usually made of wooden beams with thatch and compacted earth in order to shed the rain. Sometimes tiles were laid between the beams and the thatch and earth placed over them.¹

Four men decide that they have seen their friend suffer with his ailment long enough. Their friend cannot walk so they carry him on a cot to the house where Jesus is. When they arrive, they cannot get close to Jesus because of

¹ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 632.

the crowd. One of them gets the idea to take their friend onto the roof and lower him down into the midst of the room where Jesus is. On the roof, the four friends dig through the branches and dried mud covering the wooden rafters of the house. When the friends make a sufficiently large hole, they carefully lower their friend down to where Jesus can see him.

The scribes and Pharisees are watching. Jesus says to the sick man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Jesus’ sentence sends shock waves through the crowd. In Jewish teaching even the Messiah could not forgive sins.² The scribes and Pharisees knew only God can forgive sins. They consider what Jesus has said to be blasphemy. Jesus perceives their thoughts.

This is the first mention of the scribes in Mark’s account. Scribes were men who were schooled in the Word of God and its oral interpretation. They were men who had gone through a testing process that led to a sort of ordination into a “closed order of legal specialists.” Scribes were considered to be guardians of the truth and well-qualified to teach and discern truth. They criticized Jesus a number of times especially regarding His refusal to submit to the halaka, the oral law.

In the Old Testament, sin and disease, forgiveness and health are frequently interrelated ideas. The man being carried by his friends most likely thought he was sick because of sin. Furthermore, because of his lameness, he was virtually cut off from any atonement for his sins. His lameness made him an outcast, a person the priests might not ever minister to. Yet, he could not be cured without their ministry to him, or so he thought.

The scribes were people of strong religious conviction. They thought they understood everything concerning sin and sickness and forgiveness and healing. They thought they knew what to expect in the nature of the Messiah. They could not adjust their thinking to allow for the possibility that Jesus was the Messiah, and they certainly could not ascribe to Him the power and authority to forgive sin. The scribes thought they were standing for orthodoxy when they stated that only God could forgive sin, but their orthodoxy had caused them to shut their eyes to the truth about the One who stood in their midst. Jesus knew that to help the lame man accept being healed, He would first have to help him be rid of his sins. In his act of forgiveness Jesus was also declaring the presence of God’s kingdom among men.³

2 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 633.

3 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 634.

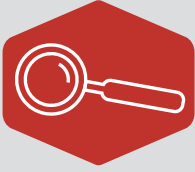


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

The crowd hears the word of forgiveness from Jesus. They see the action of Jesus when He heals the lame man. They are amazed at both His forgiveness and His action. Is it possible that you and I can be caught up in the wrong details? If Jesus walked bodily into our world, most likely He would lift people from their state of helplessness and instill in them the faith necessary to receive a miracle from God. Consider these lessons from this portion of Scripture:

- Jesus sees our faith.
- Jesus sees our need.
- Jesus sees the cross.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- Describe a time when you stepped out in faith and acted. How did it make you feel?
- Take some time to ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind someone who can no longer carry themselves, who has suffered too long, who is down and nearly lost. How can you partner with the Holy Spirit to bring them to Jesus?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

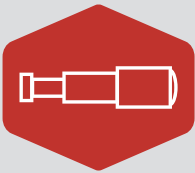
- Mark 2:11. Was sickness part of God's plan?
- Mark 2:11. Why does Satan use human suffering?
- Mark 2:11. What happens when a person receives healing?



Lesson 10: Mark 2:13–17 Biggest Sinner in the City

Main Idea: In this lesson, you'll meet a man suffering from the consequences of his choices. When invited by Jesus to leave his current life for a new one, the choice he makes will change everything.

Scripture: Mark 2:13–17



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

For these verses, the setting is Capernaum. This area was ruled by the Romans, but they set three different leaders in place for overseeing the land. Capernaum was situated on a major road that went from Egypt to Syria. It was the first city on the road under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas as travelers left the territory ruled by Herod Philip. All travelers carrying dutiable goods had to stop in Capernaum to pay their taxes. Matthew worked in the customs office here, which must have been either right on the main road or within easy access to it.

When Rome conquered an area, they would look at its industry, economy, and population and then levy a tax on that area. Rome would install a governor who would be responsible for enforcing Roman law and managing litigation in that area. The governor would work with the tax collector to make sure Rome would receive the assigned taxes.

Herod the Tetrach was a petty king who was more like a monarch in Galilee. Rome allowed him to govern, and Herod made sure the taxes were collected to appease Rome and maintain his own government. In order to collect the taxes, Rome would sell franchises. If you wanted to make a lot of money and had no moral scruples, then you could bid on a franchise. Tax collector jobs were greatly sought after as a sure way to get rich quickly.¹ The one with the highest bid would be given the right to collect taxes at a certain place.

There were two types of tax collectors. One was the *gabba'im* and the other was the *mokhesim*. These two tax collectors would collect property and income tax, as well as import, export, and toll taxes. The people saw tax collectors as traitors who brutalized their own people to pacify Rome.

All three gospels tell the story in these verses. Matthew calls the tax collector Matthew. Luke and Mark call him Levi. Levi was probably his given name and Matthew (“gift of God”) his apostolic name.² He was a native of Galilee who lived in Capernaum. He was more than likely an educated man. He was ambitious and self-seeking, determined to get rich, to be successful no matter how great the cost. Levi would have been an outcast from his religion, unwelcome in the synagogue and temple because of his job and his ties with Rome. No doubt Levi heard Jesus preach, teach, and do miracles. Jesus must have seen something in Levi worth redeeming. Jesus stops at Levi’s tax booth and invites him to join Him on a discipleship pathway. Levi does not argue but simply gets up, leaving his lifework to pursue Christ. The new thing in Christianity is not the doctrine that God saves sinners. No Jew would have denied that. It is the assertion ‘that God loves and saves them as *sinners*.’³

1 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 634.

2 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 634.

3 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 635.

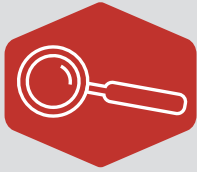


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Levi made a choice to be a tax collector. He probably did not realize the full consequences of this choice until he had gone too far to turn back. Then, in the eyes of the people, it was too late. Levi was forever branded. Many of us have made bad choices that have adversely affected our lives. We made those choices without full knowledge; we have suffered because of our choices. Levi teaches us that it is never too late. Jesus will accept us as we are and then change us, by His Spirit, into the person He has destined us to be. Consider these lessons from this section of Scripture:

- Our choices do not eliminate the reach of Jesus.
- Once we have an encounter with Jesus, we have a reason to share our story.
- Do not allow scorners and doubters to deny Jesus' acceptance.
- Jesus came to change the lives of people.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

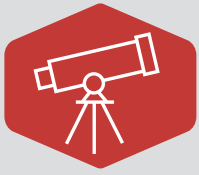
- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being most likely and 4 not likely, rate yourself on how often you make choices that only provide temporary satisfaction in your life. What can you do to improve your resistance toward false fulfillment?

- Whose hurts and pains do you know the best? What plan can you develop to reach these people?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

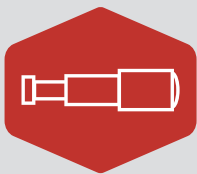
- Mark 2:17. Describe in your own words Jesus' call to sinners.



Lesson 11: Mark 2:18–22 Good News about the Good News

Main Idea: This lesson looks at the difference between what Jesus offers and what the Pharisees offered.

Scripture: Mark 2:18–22



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Controversy arises in this portion of Scripture because the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees are observing a time of fasting, but the disciples of Jesus are not. The biblical Jewish calendar had only one day per year of required fasting, the Day of Atonement. But Pharisees had created a tradition of fasting on Mondays and Thursdays every week. Their fast was from 6:00AM to 6:00PM. Possible reasons the Pharisees fasted may have been to display their piety and to fulfill ritual handed down to them. It is also possible that their fasting was tied into their expectancy of the coming Messiah. The Pharisees' disciples were probably observing one of the bi-weekly fasts. In both instances fasting was a sign of true piety. This being the case, "some people" (Mark does not identify them specifically) were asking why Jesus' disciples were not evidencing true religious piety by fasting.¹ A rabbi or teacher was usually responsible for the behavior of his disciples.

¹ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 636.

The Pharisees are trying to force Christ to follow their traditions. They cannot accept Jesus unless He conforms to their ways. Jesus uses the example of a wedding party to counter their argument. During a couple's wedding week, they would not fast. Instead, the wedding party would celebrate with family and friends. Craig Keener provides some insight when he says, "Wedding feasts ideally involved seven days of festivity; one was not permitted to fast or engage in other acts of mourning or difficult labor during a wedding feast."² Jesus clearly warns that a time for fasting would come for His followers when their Bridegroom would be taken away. A wedding, new wine, and a new garment are all symbols of the New Age. The main teaching of the parable seems to be that the newness the coming of Jesus brings cannot be confined to the old forms.³

² Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 134.

³ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 637.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

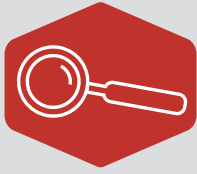
What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Traditions have value. Through traditions, we hand down a set of beliefs and practices that form structure for our lives. Traditions provide continuity for our society and a sense of righteousness. Traditions are what make a church feel like home. They give us a standard by which to judge our own experiences in worship. By tradition, we know what to expect.

However, a thin line separates worship of God from worship of tradition. As believers, we are to touch Jesus and have Him touch us. We have to be careful to always keep this purpose in view. There is always tension between walking with Jesus and religion.

The people in our text live during a unique time—Jesus is walking among them. But their traditions keep them from the blessing Jesus wants to give them. Consider a few of the lessons from this section of Scripture:

- Jesus brings celebration; religion brings condemnation.
- Jesus brings new life; religion offers inadequate patches.
- Jesus brings an even bigger life; religion offers a brittle life.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- What are some of your favorite traditions in your personal life? Church life?

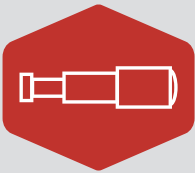
- Read Colossians 2:6-8. What can you glean from these verses about traditions?



Lesson 12: Mark 2:23–3:6 The Sabbath was Made for Us

Main Idea: Jesus clashes with the Pharisees over the Sabbath, challenging their views and offering a new perspective that still challenges people today.

Scripture: Mark 2:23–3:6



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In this passage, Jesus and His disciples have just completed a trip to Jerusalem for the observance of the Passover and are now headed back to Galilee where Jesus will continue His preaching and healing ministry. This text outlines a clash between the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were very devoted to the Old Testament Law of Moses. It was their way of having God at the center of everything. They believed that Law was the best possible set of principles to have at the core of a person's life. At some point, their emphasis shifted from finding God through the Law to satisfying the Law for the Law's sake. Their focus was no longer on communing with God. It was, instead, on propagating their fairly narrow view of what the Law said. When Christ came and did not uphold their views and interpretations of the Law, the Pharisees disdained Him.

Jesus and His disciples did not take time to eat. Jesus allowed them to walk through a grain field and, with their hands, take enough food for a meal. To the Pharisees, maintaining the *halakah* took precedence over human need.

According to the text, Jesus is not picking, husking, and eating grain but His disciples are. The Pharisees hurl their accusations at the disciples. Craig Keener provides insight as to why Jesus defends His disciples. He says, “teachers were held responsible for the behavior of their disciples, and many rabbis considered it proper to defend the honor of their disciples.”¹ When the Pharisees come against Jesus and His disciples, Jesus answers them out of His knowledge of the Old Testament. His answer comes from 1 Samuel. The Tabernacle was evidently in Nob at this time. David and his men are engaged with the enemy. He sets up a meeting place with his men but first stops at the Tabernacle to ask for bread. He’s told that the only bread available is the bread of Presence from the Holy Place. Even though the men with David are not priests, David declares them holy because of their mission and they are given bread.

In Mark, Jesus makes two declarations. First, He declares, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” In this declaration, Jesus claims He is God, the Son. Jesus knows the true meaning of the Sabbath is to give humans a day of rest so that they will have time to reflect on the goodness of God. Jesus’ second declaration is that since He is Lord of the Sabbath, He has the perspective to give proper interpretation and application to God’s Word regarding the Sabbath.

Jesus then enters the same synagogue as the man with a deformed hand. The tension is high as a number of people have come to watch Jesus to see if He will break their laws. Jesus asks the man to “stretch out his hand” which is humanly impossible. By faith, the man lifts up his arm, stretches out that arm with his withered hand and in the process, his hand is healed by the power of God. The majority school of Pharisees in this period, the *Shammaites*, prohibited prayer for the sick on the sabbath, but did not seek to kill the minority school of Pharisees, *Hillelites* for allowing such prayer.² The majority school of Pharisees were on a mission to preserve their system.

1 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), pg. 135.

2 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), pg. 136.



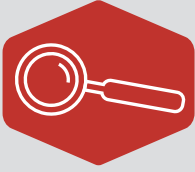
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

As believers, a common mistake is to think that if we follow a certain formula, we will be assured of God's blessing. God has a perspective on issues that you and I do not have because He sees the beginning of time, the end of time, and everything in between.

But when we combine what we see Jesus do in the gospels with what is directly taught in the epistles, we discover principles that give direction for our lives. Consider these lessons from the text:

- Sabbath is given to believers as a time to praise God for what He has done.
- Sabbath is acknowledging the pattern God has given believers to follow.
- Sabbath is given to believers as a time to protect the body from wearing out, the soul from burning out, and the spirit from tuning out.
- Healing cannot be rigidly scheduled.
- We must receive the gift of faith that comes by the Spirit, what may not be natural to our way of thinking.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
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 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



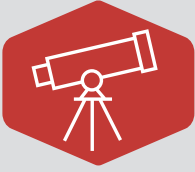
- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- What does the Sabbath mean to you?

- What are some ways you can practice the Sabbath?

- Give an example of righteous anger and unrighteous anger.

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very well and 4 not well, rate how well you walk in obedience to the revealed will of God. How can you improve?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 2:27. What was a person to do on the Sabbath?

- Mark 2:27. What happens when a person ignores the principle of the Sabbath?

- Mark 3:5. What are two things you can glean from this note?

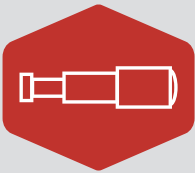
- Mark 3:6. Who were the Herodians and why did they oppose Jesus?



Lesson 13: Mark 3:7-19 Jesus Prepares His Team

Main Idea: This lesson studies the way Jesus chose and commissioned His apostles, giving them not just a new mission to accomplish, but also a new identity.

Scripture: Mark 3:7-19



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Jesus is trying to get away from the crowds, but they follow Him. Craig Keener informs readers “Idumea was south of Judea; east of the Jordan River was Perea, and Tyre and Sidon were to the northwest. Like Galilee, Idumea and Perea were religiously Jewish territories once dominated by Gentiles; Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities.”¹ Concerned about the press of so many bodies, He tells the disciples to get a boat ready in case they need to get away. The crowd seems to have had little interest in Jesus other than as a miracle-worker. Despite this, he graciously healed many of them.² Here at the height of His popularity, He feels it is time to pour into His disciples. Jesus knows that they are called not just to associate with Him but also to imitate Him and be His representatives.

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 136.

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 641.

After some time ministering to the people, Jesus retreats to a mountain in Galilee, calling twelve men by name to follow Him. Jesus appoints, selects, and ordains the twelve men. He gives them the title of apostle and then gives them instructions: to go to all the places He is sending them, preaching His message, casting out demons, and healing the sick. The purpose for which the Twelve were appointed was twofold: (1) “that they might be with him”; (2) “that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”³

Of the twelve names listed in this passage, five have a descriptive remark. One of the Simons has a name change. The other Simon is described as a zealot. James and John are given the name Sons of Thunder, and Judas is called Iscariot to signify that he is the only non-Galilean and the one who betrays Jesus.

Today, you would be hard pressed to find anyone who would evaluate your character and legacy by your name alone. However, in the first century, names carried great significance, and the act of naming someone was profoundly important. When Jesus calls and commissions the twelve to be His apostles, He carves their names into history. When God puts a name on someone, it is transformational. Four of them were fishermen, one a hated tax collector, another a member of a radical and violent political party. Of six of them we know practically nothing. All were laymen. There was not a preacher or an expert in the Scriptures in the lot. Yet it was with these men that Jesus established his church and disseminated his Good News to the end of the earth.⁴

³ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 642.

⁴ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 643.

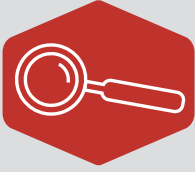


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

There is no evidence that any of the apostles were worthy of being chosen to be with Jesus. Jesus chose them because He wanted them. He intercepted their lives and, to satisfy righteousness, called them. Consider some of these lessons:

- Jesus knows the value of balanced rhythm of life.
- Jesus has a mission for His followers.
- Jesus calls His followers by name.
- Jesus will make His followers what they are not.
- Jesus equips and empowers His followers for service.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

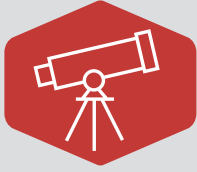
How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- Describe what your life mission is. How has Jesus confirmed it?
- How has what you have been named in your past affected what you do or don't do today?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

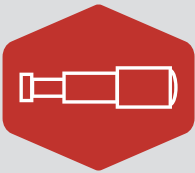
- Mark 3:14. What does the word *apostle* mean? What was their function?
- Mark 3:14. What is the primary call of a disciple?
- Mark 3:14. What should a believer's activity follow?
- Mark 3:15. What were two of Jesus' purposes for coming to earth?
- Mark 3:15. What does Jesus want to go along with preaching?



Lesson 14: Mark 3:20–35 Jesus is Misunderstood

Main Idea: This lesson looks at the expectations Jesus' family had of Him and His response to them, prioritizing His mission to reconcile people to God.

Scripture: Mark 3:20–35



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

The setting of these verses is most likely Peter's house in Capernaum. Jesus is faced with a large crowd and their pressing needs. Jesus is being pictured as so busy that He had not time for proper nourishment, which causes His family concern. Jesus had left the place of security in His home in Nazareth where He had gainful employment, family support, and what His family thought was His future. Now Jesus was running headlong into conflict with the religious leaders of the day. Jesus is probably six months into his 18-month-long season of ministry in Galilee. He is at the peak of His popularity.

In reading Mark 3:20–35, it may surprise you that Mary could misunderstand Jesus' calling. After all, she had been visited by an angel who announced His birth to her. She had been told who Jesus would be and that He would save His people from their sins. However, in the culture of that day, as the oldest son, Jesus would have been expected to pick up the family business and care

for His family. And now Mary is outside the house where Jesus is meeting with His disciples, calling for Him to cease ministry and come home with her. This probably means that they wanted to take him back to Nazareth. This would remove him from the strain of having so many people constantly pressing on him to meet their physical and spiritual needs. The verb translated “take charge” is *kratēsai* and is used of arresting someone in 6:17; 12:12; 14:1, 44, 46, 49, and 51.¹

The house is so packed with disciples listening to Jesus’ discourse that Mary and her four sons (Matthew 13) find it impossible to push their way through the crowd. So, Jesus asks the people in front of Him to give a message to His family that while He cares about them, it is those who obey Him that He considers His relatives. By telling this story, Mark paints a picture of Jesus’ heart toward all who follow Him.

In the Old Testament, God reveals Himself and His saving power through the sacrificial system. If someone refused that system and, in the process, viciously maligned the name of God, there was no other means of salvation. The person would be considered lost. In addition, if the person blasphemed—made malicious, derogatory statements about the name of God—that person would be stoned. The reason was because God alone was salvation. Rejecting God was cutting off all hope of having sins forgiven.

Perhaps you have made remarks that were awful and malignant. Jesus says that those kinds of statements are forgivable. Ugly as they are, they can still be forgiven. However, Jesus warns that if someone blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, they are subject to eternal condemnation. Blasphemy is the deliberate rejection of the Holy Spirit’s witness to Christ, to His Word and His convicting work against sin, attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to the devil. When one blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, they have repeatedly refused God’s guidance and as a result experienced the loss of ability to recognize God’s goodness. Their moral values have been inverted so that good is seen as evil and evil as good, and they have lost their consciousness of sin. The sin described here is “a perversion of spirit which, in defiance of moral values elects to call light darkness.”²

1 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 644.

2 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 645.

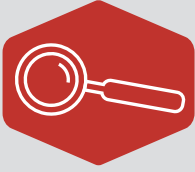


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

In this portion of Scripture, Mark gives three different responses to three different groups of people. To readers, Mark gives the sense that doing God's will is part of following Him. If Jesus is Lord, one is to obey Him. We can know facts about Jesus but if we do not respond to them, we can come to a place where it is impossible to respond. Consider these lessons:

- Jesus' mission is to reconcile all of us to God.
- Jesus desires those who follow Him to become His disciples.
- Jesus invests all He has into His disciples and expects the same in return.
- Jesus expects His believers to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe your understanding of the mission of Jesus.

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not well, rate how well your life is aligned with the mission of Jesus. How can you improve?

- How have you allowed the Spirit of God to lead your life?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the FireBible article “Power over Satan and Demons.” Answer the following from the article.

- What does it mean to “drive out” or “cast out?”
- What are some things a believer should keep in mind regarding Satan?
- Why is the world separated from God and seized by Satan?
- What are demons?
- Where can demons live?
- Is all sickness caused by demons?
- What types of things do demons promote in these last days?
- What was one of Jesus’ main purposes?
- What did Jesus do to break Satan’s power and give us power over him and his demons?

- What place has God prepared for the devil and his demons?
- Can the Holy Spirit and demons live in the same body?
- If a believer is not led by the Spirit, what influence can demons have on them?
- What is the key to being free from the influence of demons?
- Describe the three stages of spiritual battle.

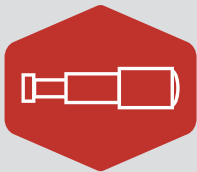
- Write out in your own words the seven steps in a believer's spiritual battle.



Lesson 15: Mark 4:1-20 The Heart of the Matter

Main Idea: This lesson explores one of Jesus' most famous parables and its meaning.

Scripture: Mark 4:1-20



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Jesus taught in parables. Parables are stories out of everyday life with heavenly meaning which teach great truths. When studying parables at least four questions should be examined. First, what is the context that motivates the parable being taught? Second, what is the one main point of the parable? Third, what can the reader glean about God's kingdom being described by Jesus through the parable? Fourth, if I believe the truth, what should my next steps be?

At this point in Mark's gospel, Jesus has been preaching for a number of months. He has healed many in the great healing campaigns of Galilee. He has shown great compassion to the leper, the Centurion's servant, Peter's mother-in-law, a demon-possessed man, and a man who was paralyzed. Jesus has called and sent out the 12 and dealt with the misunderstanding of John the Baptist. The cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum have refused to hear Jesus. The Pharisees have accused Jesus of being in league with demons.

In response to the pressure from the Pharisees, Jesus teaches a parable, which He will later, in private, explain to His disciples.

Best known as the parable of the sower, this story might be better titled the parable of the soil. The sower in the story does what a sower is supposed to do. Likewise, the seed does what it is supposed to do. It is the varying condition of the soil that determines the outcome. Craig Keener points out “the fertile Jordan Valley normally yielded between ten and less often a hundredfold; but for more of Palestine, the average yield was seven and a half to tenfold. Jesus reports here are very good yields so the yield is worth the sown seed that was wasted.”¹

This parable describes four different types of soil. One type of soil is on the path. This type of soil represents those who have a heart that is hard toward receiving the seed. Another type of soil is shallow, representing those who might have a surface willingness to receive God’s word but not a deep will to follow Him. The third type of soil is thorny. This represents those whose heart is crowded with many concerns of life and have no room left for anything of God. The final type of soil is good, representing those who have a soft, open heart to receive, accept, and understand the things of God. The great emphasis in the parable is on the act of sowing the seed rather than on the soils into which it is sown.²

1 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 137.

2 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 648.



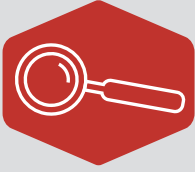
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

The heart of this parable centers around how a person may respond to God's word. Jesus wants His disciples to pay attention to and wrap their minds around this parable. He teaches them that the sower is not worried about what the soil is like but sows seed regardless. They too are to sow the gospel message regardless of people's response.

In the same manner today, believers should not be concerned about the condition of others' soil. Neither should they be caught up with the style with which they throw the seed. The power is not in the sower but in the seed. Our job is to first receive it within our own hearts and, in turn, to sow it freely. Consider these lessons for the believer today:

- Sowing is universal.
- Growing is individual.
- Reaping is selective.
- Spiritual growth is related to the quality of the individual response.
- A response is needed when God speaks.
-



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

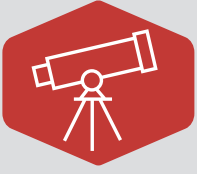
 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- Looking at the four types of soil, which one best describes your heart?
- Write out a plan to improve the quality of the soil of your heart.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God’s Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 4:2. Describe a parable.

- Mark 4:2. From whom does a parable conceal truth?

- Mark 4:3. What are three truths that can be learned from this parable?

- Mark 4:3. What are four enemies to God's word?

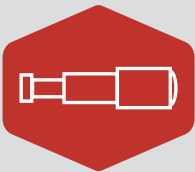
- Mark 4:15-17. Describe the five reasons people are half-hearted in their spiritual commitments.



Lesson 16: Mark 4:21–34 Small Beginnings, Big Endings

Main Idea: This lesson explores one of Jesus' most famous parables and its meaning.

Scripture: Mark 4:21–34



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In this section of the lesson, there are four mini parables told by Jesus, along with His exhortations to hear what is being said. Verses 21–22 tell the mini parable of the lamp. In the Old Testament, a lamp is symbolic of God's presence and God's Word. Jesus says no one lights a lamp only to hide it. The one who lights a lamp will use it to light the room. He explains that just like a light illuminates a room, so the light of the Gospel shines in this world. Everything hidden will be revealed. As the purpose of the lamp is to be put on a lampstand and not under a bowl or a bed, so the present hiddenness of Jesus will not always be—hidden things are meant to be brought out into the open (v. 22)—and God intends that one day Jesus will be manifested in all his glory, at the Parousia. But who Jesus really is, is now hidden. It is therefore of utmost importance for us to be careful hearers (v. 23), i.e., to have spiritual perception.¹

¹ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 652.

It is helpful to understand that the people Jesus tells these parables to live in a first-century culture of hearing—speaking to be remembered and listening to memorize. Verses 24–25 warn us to be careful about how and what we hear. We must only open our spirits to the genuine, heaven-sent Word of God. With the same measure a believer uses to hear, they will receive more. The more a believer opens their ears and heart to the Word of God, the more revelation of God’s Word will be given to them. Here the meaning is that the more one listens to the word of Jesus with spiritual perception and appropriates it, the more the truth about Jesus will be revealed.²

Verses 26–29 are only found in Mark’s gospel. Perhaps he wanted to share from personal experience that between receiving the promise of God and the fulfillment of that promise, there is a time of waiting where patience must be exercised. This in-between time might be difficult but is an integral part of God’s plan. The point of the parable is as follows: “As seedtime is followed in due time by harvest, so will the present hiddenness and ambiguousness of the kingdom of God be succeeded by its glorious manifestation.”³

Verses 30–34 are also included in Matthew and Luke. Jesus says this illustration is a teaching about the kingdom of God. To Mark and his readers of the day, God’s kingdom meant the rule and reign of God in the hearts of people evidenced in the way they do life—a way of living that brings blessing to all around. Jesus teaches that this Kingdom is like the smallest seed that when planted produces one of the largest plants in the entire garden, a bush three to four feet tall, with branches strong enough for birds to nest. The main point of the parable is that the kingdom of God (v. 30) is like what happens to the mustard seed. It has insignificant and weak beginnings, but a day will come when it will be great and powerful.⁴ Craig Keener says, “People could not be ready to grasp the secret of the nature of Jesus’s kingdom until the secret about the nature of his messiahship had been revealed.”⁵

2 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 652.

3 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 653.

4 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 653.

5 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 139.



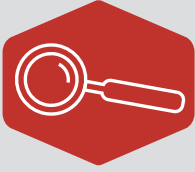
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

What these mini parables lead me to do is to recommit myself to hearing God's Word as the very source of strength in my life. Hearing brings about obedience. Hearing fosters faith. The better my hearing, the more I apply what I hear, and the greater my ability to receive revelation from God.

Furthermore, the words we choose to say have the power of death and life. We can either edify or crucify others with speech. The kingdom of God planted in a person's mind through well-chosen words is like a little seed that can bring a great harvest in their life. Consider committing to the following, based on this passage of Scripture:

- Commit to elevating Jesus to the most prominent place in your life.
- Commit to living the truth that you hear.
- Commit to holding nothing back from God.
- Commit to planting small seeds of righteousness in your life.
- Commit to planting small seeds of righteousness in the lives of others.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

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 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

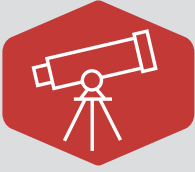
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- How does God respond to those who use well the grace and gifts given to them from God?

- How does God respond to those who do not use the grace and gifts given to them from God?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate how well you are in sowing small seeds of righteousness weekly. Write out a plan to improve.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?
- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

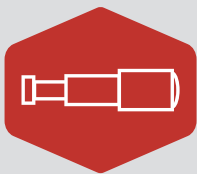
- Mark 4:25. Describe in your own words a key principle of His kingdom.



Lesson 17: Mark 4:35–41: Jesus Calms a Storm

Main Idea: This lesson explores a life-changing event for Jesus' disciples and its implications for our own trust in God.

Scripture: Mark 4:35–41



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Jesus has spent the whole day in ministry in and around the north shore of the Lake of Galilee. He has healed people, driven demons out of people, and discussed the issues of the Kingdom of God. Throngs of people have come to be around Him.

Suddenly Jesus says to His disciples that they need to go to the other side of the lake. The boat obtained by the disciples only holds thirteen people, but they obey and push the boat out into the open water. Jesus goes to the back of the boat and falls asleep. The people who have been listening to Him get into their boats to follow after Him.

The Lake of Galilee is about thirteen miles long and only about seven miles wide at its widest point. A storm came upon them which was a fairly common occurrence on the Lake of Galilee. The lake is six hundred feet below sea level and nestled in a crater surrounded by mountain peaks. To the west, the hills of

Galilee rise about fifteen hundred feet. To the East is a plateau about sixteen miles wide, forty-two miles long, and three thousand feet high, known as the Golan Heights. To the North is Mt. Hermon, which is part of the mountains of Lebanon. This mountain sits nine thousand two hundred feet in height which receives snow that melts into the Lake of Galilee.

The winds come off the warm Mediterranean Sea, move across the warm desert, and collide with the cold air coming off Mount Hermon. When they meet at the Lake of Galilee the result is an almost tornado-like wind which at times can significantly impact the Lake of Galilee. These mountains have crevices that allow the wind to shoot through them and across the water. The winds can get so strong that they create waves normally found in much larger bodies of water.

In this passage, Jesus is asleep in a boat that is no match for the fierceness of the waves. The cushion (the definite article is used) was apparently the only one on board, and Jesus used it as a pillow for his head. This is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus is said to have slept.¹ The disciples are afraid and show great timidity. It is fascinating that these men who had spent their lives fishing on the lake are now terrified. Mark provides many details about this event. He tells the reader it is evening. He tells the reader that Jesus is leaving the crowds. He informs the readers there are other boats on the lake, and he tells readers that Jesus is in the back of the boat sleeping on a cushion.

The disciples wake Jesus up and accuse Him of not caring since He was asleep, oblivious to their concerns. Jesus stands in the boat, rebukes the wind, and speaks peace to the lake. Craig Keener says, “In Jewish tradition, the one who ruled the winds and sea was God himself.”² Suddenly, where before there was a mega storm, there is now a mega calm. Mark tells his readers that the storm dies immediately and becomes calm. It happens so quickly that it startles the disciples. Jesus also rebuked his disciples for their lack of faith (v. 40). The preferred reading (*oupō*, “not yet”; NLT, “still”) indicates that Jesus had expected them by this time to have demonstrated more mature faith. Jesus uses this opportunity to ask His disciples a couple of thought-provoking questions.³

1 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 655.

2 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 139.

3 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 655.

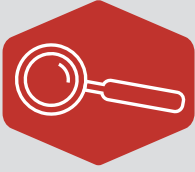


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

These verses from Mark contain only about one hundred fifty words. When Jesus says to His disciples that they will move to the other side of the lake, there is no time to make preparation. This trip is not convenient, but it is necessary. Often times what we think we know, we only know in theory, not practice. The disciples are learning who Jesus is, and so we too might consider the following lessons:

- The will of God often moves us in a direction that we have not planned.
- God has a plan and direction for our life.
- In the midst of doing God's will, storms can come.
- If our faith is in anything other than Jesus, we will always be disappointed.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe a storm in your life when you felt as if God did not care only to discover that He really did care.

- If Jesus were to ask you as He did His disciples, “Where is your faith?” how would you respond?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

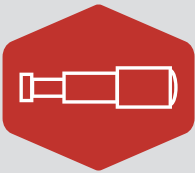
- Mark 4:38. Describe why Mark might have told his readers that Jesus was exhausted and asleep.



Lesson 18: Mark 5:1-20: A Power Encounter

Main Idea: Jesus delivers a man from unclean spirits, drawing surprising reactions from onlookers and challenging us to consider our own openness to His power in our lives.

Scripture: Mark 5:1-20



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In the middle of the night, Jesus crosses the Lake of Galilee and probably arrives on the eastern shore sometime after midnight in the Decapolis. Craig Keener says about the Decapolis, “it was a loose confederation of ten Hellenistic cities (predominantly Gentile, though many Jews live there), with ties also the Nabatean Arabs.”¹ The Holy Spirit has directed Him to a place where at least two men, maybe more, appear to be in torment. After Jesus and the disciples arrive on the shore, they walk inland a mile or two to a graveyard, a place where caves in the rocks were used for tombs. Craig Keener informs, “Jewish people considered tombs unclean and a popular haunt for demons.”²

Mark talks about a man who is vexed by evil spirits and provides some interesting details. First, this man lives in a graveyard. Second, he is filled with

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 140.

² Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 139.

unclean spirits. Third, this man is so empowered by the evil spirits in him that he cannot be bound, even with chains. Fourth, his inner struggle often drives him to cut himself and to scream like an injured bird.

When Jesus comes close to where the man is, his reaction is to run to Jesus. This man kneels before Jesus and cries out, begging Jesus not to torment him. The word should be correctly translated *prosekynēsen autō* as “fell on his knees in front of him” rather than “worshiped” (KJV). It was an act of homage rather than worship.³ The demon recognizes that he is in the presence of one who is greatly superior to him. At that point, Jesus commands the unclean spirits to leave him. Keener helps the reader understand when he says, “Ancients were familiar with demons pleading for mercy or other concessions when they were about to be defeated.”⁴ The demons and Jesus have a conversation as to where will they go when He drives them out. They settle on a herd of pigs, and that is where Jesus sends them. The pigs, invaded by the evil spirits, run down a steep slope, plunge into the lake of Galilee, and drown. Why would Jesus allow the demons to enter the pigs and ultimately kill the entire herd? A tentative answer is that Jesus wanted to give tangible evidence to the man and to the people that the demons had actually left him and that their purpose had been to destroy him even as they destroyed the pigs.⁵

There are two different reactions to these events, one from the people in the area and the other from the man who was delivered. The people’s reaction is to be afraid. They beg Jesus to leave their area. The delivered man sits clothed and in his right mind. This man begs to be with Jesus and to go with Him wherever He goes. It is interesting that because His messiahship could be misunderstood in the Jewish areas, Jesus did not want people telling what God had done through Him. However, in this Gentile region people might perceive Jesus as a magician so Jesus encourages this man to go and tell what God had done in his life. He becomes a preacher to the Decapolis, and the people marvel at his testimony.

³ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 657.

⁴ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 140.

⁵ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 658.

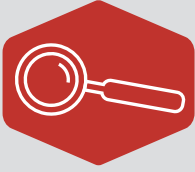


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

The enemy always tries to outsmart our Lord. The devil has been lying to, abusing, and deceiving people since he was expelled from heaven. In Mark 5, the evil spirits think they can move into the pigs and not really lose their footing on earth, but evil always kills. What drives us is human need. What empowers the believer is the Holy Spirit. What gives the believer hope is our knowledge that in any dark night of the human soul, we are never far from the sunshine of the glorious deliverance provided by Christ's victory over sin and death at the cross and at the tomb. Consider these lessons:

- Jesus reveals Himself at the height of our spiritual battles.
- The greater the spiritual need, the greater the need of Jesus and His power.
- Jesus is Lord over all situations.
- The reaction of people to the presence of God varies.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

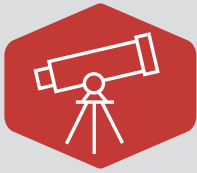
How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- How comfortable are you with evil?
- Describe a time in your life when you felt overwhelmed by the attack of the enemy.
- How does what you allow in your mind, home, life, and heart affect your spirit?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

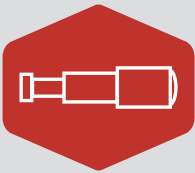
- Mark 5:2. Describe what Jesus did for the man with an unclean spirit. How did the townspeople react?



Lesson 19: Mark 5:21-43: God Does Things Differently

Main Idea: This lesson explores two different healing stories, the ways they are different and similar, along with how each challenges our expectations of God.

Scripture: Mark 5:21-43



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In this passage Jesus leaves the area on the southeast side of the Lake of Galilee where He gave divine deliverance to the demon-possessed man. He travels back across the sea to Capernaum and starts His teaching and healing ministry again. Jesus is standing beside the lake when He is approached by Jairus. According to Jewish law contact with graves, blood, or death made one ceremonially unclean.¹

Jairus is the chairman of the group of men who run the local synagogue. He has to be an outstanding man to be elected to such a position of responsibility. He is basically the leader of the committee who keeps all the ministries of the synagogue in operation. Mark uses the phrase “ruler of synagogue” four times to describe Jairus in this passage. His official position might well have been to oppose Jesus’ ministry, but his daughter has become

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 660.

ill, and his view has changed. Luke's account of the story tells us that his daughter is twelve years old. Jairus approaches Jesus, bows in respect for Him, and emotionally asks Jesus to come and heal his daughter who is at the point of death. Jesus responds to Jairus' faith and goes with him.

On the way to Jairus' house, Jesus has an encounter with a woman who has been sick for twelve years. What is fascinating is the daughter had lived the same number of years as the woman who touched Jesus had been sick. Her sickness has ruined her health, taken her wealth, and consumed her and her family. She is now a beggar and in despair. She hears Jesus is in town. This woman has a continual flow of blood which makes her unclean. Sexually, she cannot touch her husband. Socially, she cannot be around people. Maternally, she cannot have children. Spiritually, she cannot be at the synagogue. Financially, she is bankrupt. She should not be in the crowd. Had the crowd identified that she was there, they would have thrown rocks at her and driven her away. However, she throws off cultural taboos and creeps up behind Jesus and touches a tassel on the corner of the robe draped around Jesus' shoulders. She is healed and Jesus address this woman as daughter which is the only occurrence in the Gospels of Jesus' addressing a woman by that word.² Craig Keener points out "If this woman touched anyone or anyone's clothes, she rendered that person ceremonially unclean for the rest of the day."³

After Jesus heals the woman, Jesus and Jairus continue on to Jairus' house where his sick daughter lies. Upon reaching the house, people come out and tell him not to bother Jesus anymore: his daughter is dead. As was the custom, professional mourners had been secured; and they were already at work.⁴ But Jesus does not accept these words. He takes the girl by the hand, speaks to her, and she is healed. The girl responded immediately to the words of Jesus. Jesus gave two orders. First, Jesus told them not to reveal any facts about the miracle. Second, Jesus told them to give this girl something to eat.

2 Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 662.

3 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 141.

4 Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 662.



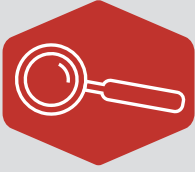
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Mark shares two healing stories that challenge our expectations of Jesus. In the first, Jairus believes Jesus can heal his daughter's fever. But upon hearing that she has died, he is challenged to believe something he has never seen Jesus do—resurrect the dead. In the second, the woman with a bleeding disorder is coming to Jesus for physical healing, but she is also given salvation—spiritual healing. She comes for a cure and receives a relationship.

From these two stories, Mark shows the reader that God's grace inverts the world's values. The woman has been bleeding for 12 years—as long as Jairus' daughter has been alive. Jairus is a man, and she is a woman. Jairus is at the top of society, and she is at the bottom. Jairus is socially sought after, and she is an outcast. Jairus is a synagogue leader, and she is not allowed in the synagogue. Jairus is rich, and she is poor. Consider some of these lessons from this passage:

- God's answers almost never come according to our schedule.
- The nature of Jesus is to move toward those who need help and healing.
- When you come to Jesus, you will receive from Him more than you expected.
- God's grace inverts the world's values.
- God is more powerful and personal than you can imagine.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

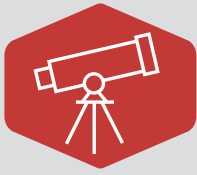
- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- How comfortable are you with evil?

- Describe a time in your life when you felt hopeless with nowhere to turn.

- Why do you think we are more often more prone to think the worst and not the best?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very likely and 4 being not very likely, rate how likely you are to plan the future without consulting the Lord. How can you improve?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 5:28. What is the responsibility of the one who receives healing?

- Mark 5:28. What does the word “healed” mean in this verse? What is the implication Mark makes?

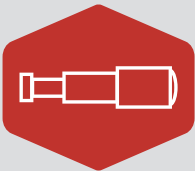
- Mark 5:36. What do the words “only believe” mean?



Lesson 20: Mark 6:1–6: That is Unbelievable

Main Idea: The story of Jesus’ trip home to Nazareth reveals the importance of belief in God, even when He acts contrary to our preconceived ideas.

Scripture: Mark 6:1–6



The Author’s Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God’s Word.

Mark moves his storyline to Jesus’ hometown, Nazareth, a small village with maybe three hundred people. Jesus had to have been the most talked about person from that small community. Jesus has just come from a ministry in which people have been raised from the dead, delivered from demons, and healed from all kinds of diseases. The people of Nazareth must have longed for such power to visit their town. In this passage, that power has come to their small community, and His name is Jesus.

Jesus undoubtedly walks into Nazareth followed by an entourage that includes His twelve disciples, the women who minister to His needs, other disciples who go everywhere with Him, and crowds that throng Him. The incident Mark records here should not be thought of as a personal visit by Jesus to his family. Rather, he comes as a rabbi accompanied by his disciples, “a detail dropped in Mt., but important for Mark, because in this part of the

gospel he is concerned with their training.”¹ The people of Nazareth probably thought they could believe in Him until they see Him. Their first reaction is amazement. They cannot believe the teaching coming from the mouth of this carpenter. But their amazement quickly turns to disbelief. The people of Nazareth have a culture and belief system that does not allow them to receive or believe the message from God from such a person as Jesus. The word translated “they took offense” is from *skandalizomai*, from which the English word “scandal” is derived.²

The people of Nazareth begin to question, but their questions are rhetorical. They already know the answer they want to hear. In their opinion, Jesus’ wisdom cannot be from God. Jesus cannot be the Messiah because they *know His origin*. The people of Nazareth were incapable of appreciating who Jesus was because, like Jesus’ own family, they identified him with themselves so closely.³ It would be impossible, in their reasoning, for such a person as Jesus to rise to the position of Messiah. Their questions leave only one conclusion: Jesus has to be filled with the devil.

This passage is startling. The parallel passage of Matthew 13:53-58 makes it clear that the issue is unbelief. If a person or group of people function in unbelief, they are guaranteed to miss out on the supernatural working of God. That’s why Jesus says to His hometown, “Since you do not have much faith, do not expect to see many miracles.” Craig Keener sheds some insight into this thought when he says, “that Jesus is ‘unable’ to do works because of their unbelief presumes a limitation not of his power but of His mission: to heal without morally directed faith would be to act like the pagan magicians of antiquity.”⁴ Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith a reaction apparently Jesus did not anticipate.

1 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 664.

2 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 665.

3 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 665.

4 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 142.

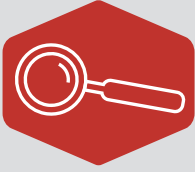


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Faith is the channel by which we receive from God the things God wants to work in our lives. Faith is powerful. Not only is faith powerful but unbelief is also powerful. Whether we choose to accept it or not, our faith or lack of faith has a direct bearing on many circumstances in our life and the blessings of God in our life, as well as whether we will know eternal life in heaven or hell. It is better to believe God and watch what He does than not to believe God and try to figure out life on your own. Consider the following lessons from this passage:

- Unbelief blinds people to the obvious.
- Unbelief builds up the irrelevant.
- Unbelief blocks the supernatural.
- When faith becomes complicated, unbelief has often set in.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

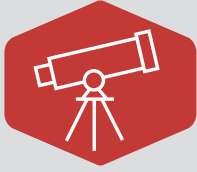


- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- How comfortable are you with evil?

- What are some keys to feed your faith and starve your doubts?

- Describe faith and unbelief in your own words.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 6:4. Describe the nine characteristics that describe Jesus as a prophet in your own words.

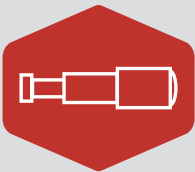
- Mark 6:6. Why is faith important?



Lesson 21: Mark 6:7-13: The ABC's of Doing Jesus' Work

Main Idea: This lesson explores what discipleship to Jesus is all about and how it played out in the lives of the twelve disciples.

Scripture: Mark 6:7-13



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Jesus has just left Nazareth where the central teaching moment seemed to be about the power of unbelief which keeps people from receiving what God would do in their lives.

In Mark 6:7, Jesus calls the twelve disciples to Himself, just to be with Him. Jesus' calling of His disciples is to become like Him before they go out to represent Him. Jesus gives them authority, which can also be translated as control, force, privilege, and competency. The verb translated "sent" is *apostellein* and carries with it the idea of official representation. "Jesus authorized the disciples to be his delegates with respect to both word and power."¹ Jesus expects them to use His authority. An authority that is not used is wasted and accomplishes nothing.

Verses 8-11 are about the character to be displayed by Jesus' disciples in

¹ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 667.

how they conduct themselves on their journey. Jesus gives them instructions for pacing the trip and for conducting themselves in front of the people they encounter. They are instructed to stay in whatever accommodations are offered to them. Craig Keener says, “Antiquity in general and Judaism in particular highly valued hospitality.”² Jesus forbids them from seeking the best offering or switching from a meager home to a more luxurious one. Whatever God provides is sufficient. Jesus commissions the disciples to preach with dignity where they are received and leave with dignity from any place that rejects the message they deliver. They are to preach the good news and not pronounce judgement upon the cities to which they are sent.

These instructions are to be understood as specifically applicable to this instance in the disciples’ ministry. While the principle of trusting in God to supply one’s needs and being content with a simple lifestyle are always commanded of disciples, Jesus later tells the twelve to take all the things they need for ministry on their journey (Luke 22:36).

Once the disciples receive their instructions from Jesus, they seem to know immediately what to do, and they depart in pairs. The disciples understand they are to personally represent Jesus as if He Himself is there. They are to proclaim the gospel message, deliver people from demonic power, and bring healing to the sick just as Jesus would do if He were there with them.

² Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 142.



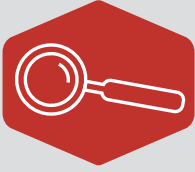
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Before we can do anything for Jesus, we must spend time with Him and be changed on the inside. Doing ministry was not Jesus' first priority for His disciples. His plan was and still is to transform a person to become like Him first, and then to send them out to preach, heal, and deliver. Discipleship is first becoming like Christ and then doing what Christ showed us to do by His example.

God works in our life in three ways. First, God wants to work for us, which He does through miracles. Second, God wants to work in us, which He does through teaching. Third, God wants to work through us to advance His Kingdom and bring more people into it. Jesus does miracles and He teaches, and then He sends. Consider the following lessons:

- The calling of God prescribes a lifestyle before it prescribes a ministry.
- Effective ministry flows out of a changed and transformed character.
- Private instruction prepares for public ministry.
- If our character is not right, no amount of equipping or training will make up for it.
- There can be no viable ministry without a people-centered focus.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

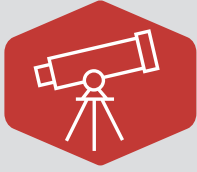
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe your understanding of authority.

- Describe your call from God.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 6:13. What was olive oil used for in the ancient world?

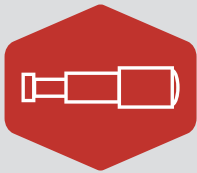
- Mark 6:13. Why was oil probably used?



Lesson 22: Mark 6:14–29: Danger of a Divided Heart

Main Idea: The circumstances surrounding the execution of John the Baptist offer much insight into the dangers of having a divided heart, fearing man over God.

Scripture: Mark 6:14–29



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In both Mark and Luke, this passage is placed right after the sending out of the twelve disciples to do ministry. Suddenly, ministry which has been confined to the place of Jesus' physical presence is multiplied by at least six times. It probably seemed to all watching that Jesus was in several places in Galilee at the same time because work was being done in His name and with the same effect in multiple places. Thus, when verse 14 records, "King Herod heard of it . . .," his reaction is probably caused by the increased activity of the disciples in many towns and villages.

There are only two passages in Mark's gospel not explicitly about Jesus, and both are about John the Baptist. In this one, Mark uses a literary device called a flashback. These verses provide some vital information about the execution of John the Baptist.

There are several Herods in the Bible. The first one, mentioned at the beginning of the Gospels, is Herod the Great. He is the ruler Rome put in place over Judea and Galilee and is in power when Jesus is born. He has four sons. Upon his death, his rule is split between them, and they are to be called tetrarchs, which means ruler of part. However, one son, Aristobulus, eventually has a disagreement with his father and Herod kills him. But prior to this, Aristobulus' daughter Herodias falls in love with Aristobulus' brother, her uncle Philip. Later, Herod Antipas, the Herod in this passage from Mark, seduces Herodias—his niece and his brother Philip's wife—and marries her. Influenced by upper-class Greek ideals, Herod undoubtedly considered himself as open-minded culturally as he was brutal politically.¹

Mark calls him a king, which was what Herod wanted to be called. But Rome would not have considered him a king. Craig Keener says, "Herod Antipas was technically tetrarch not a king; Mark may use king loosely or possibly ironically."² Part of Herod's job as the steward of the region was to keep the peace. Herod Antipas not only takes his niece and his brother's wife and marries her, but he also divorces his current wife who happens to be the daughter of a neighboring king. This act causes a war Herod loses. The Jews claim this defeat is God's judgement for Herod's sin.

Herodias who is now Herod Antipas's wife, wants John the Baptist dead because John the Baptist had confronted them and told Antipas and Aristobulus that what they did violated the law of God, that it was immoral and a tragedy all around. Herodias does not appreciate John the Baptist airing their dirty laundry in public, but she cannot kill him because her husband Antipas is protecting him. It may seem surprising that Antipas does not want to kill John who preaches that what he is doing is wicked and that God will judge him. However, according to verse 20, Antipas likes to listen to John, so much so, that he keeps pulling John out of his prison cell to come preach the message to him again. There is something about what John is saying that resonates in his soul. Antipas is intrigued and appalled, interested and offended. Antipas has come to a crossroad in his spiritual journey and does not know which way to turn.

In verse 20, Herod is said to *fear* John. It is probably not the fear that most think about when that word is spoken. Fear can mean awe, amazement, captivation. The irony of verse 21 is that it is not Herod's opportunity but Herodias. Herod has invited everyone to his birthday party. He does not want to look bad in front of his guests but wants to impress them. Herod is desperately afraid people will not see him as someone in control. Even though Herod does not have a kingdom to give Herodias's daughter, maintaining his

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), pg. 143.

² Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), pg. 142.

image of high status is his god. In contrast, John the Baptist was not a slave to fear, even the fear of death.

Herodias's finally had the opportunity she was wanted after her daughter danced before the party guests and Herod was pleased. He was so pleased he offered her up to half of his kingdom. However, it is likely the words "up to half my kingdom" may have been a kind of proverbial way of expressing openhanded generosity and were not to be taken literally.³ After consulting with her mother, she asks for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Up to this point, Herod was able to protect John the Baptist, but because he lived in a culture that valued honor, he could not refuse the request from Herodias.

³ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 670.

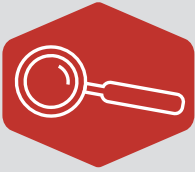


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

The tragedy of this story is not the death of John the Baptist. The real tragedy is the divided heart of Herod, a person who sees and hears the truth but cannot respond to it. A divided heart produces an unstable life. A divided heart produces spiritual vertigo. Consider these lessons:

- Discipleship has a requirement.
- A divided heart is dangerous.
- A divided heart promotes arrogance.
- A divided heart rationalizes.
- When a divided heart is exposed, there is an opportunity to change your life.
- The remedy for a divided heart is to surrender it to the Lordship of Jesus.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

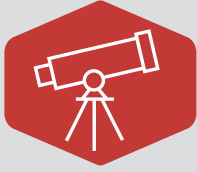
How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

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 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- What would you identify as your greatest fear?
- How have you released your greatest fear to Jesus?
- How has God exposed the secret places of your heart? What types of changes did you make once the secret place was revealed?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

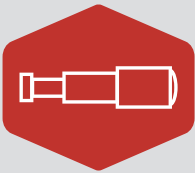
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 23: Mark 6:30–44: You Give Them Something to Eat

Main Idea: Just like the disciples learned when Jesus fed the five thousand people with next to nothing, God can take the little we offer and use it to meet people’s big needs.

Scripture: Mark 6:30–44



The Author’s Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God’s Word.

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is recorded in all four Gospels. There is not much verbal explanation offered by Jesus in the biblical text concerning the feeding of the five thousand. Mark only records two short sentences uttered by Jesus. The three other gospel writers record similar short statements made by Jesus during the process, perhaps because this was a living demonstration of the power of God. Jesus shows, rather than merely describes, how to meet the needs of hurting people.

Jesus recognizes that His disciples are tired. They need to take time to address some physical needs that have arisen because of their constant attention to the work, so Jesus takes them away to a secluded place to rest. Mark seems to have in mind the “rest in the wilderness” theme in Scripture.¹ But the disciples do not get an opportunity to rest because the masses of people anticipate

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 672.

where Jesus is going, and they are waiting for Him and the disciples when they arrive. This is the tenth time in Mark's gospel that we are told the crowds followed Jesus.

Jesus allows Himself to be visibly, emotionally moved in plain view of the disciples. It is significant that in the context of these two OT passages the shepherd theme is associated with the wilderness. Mark seems to be working with these themes. Jesus, like Moses, leads his people into the wilderness, and, like David (cf. Ezekiel 34:23, 25), Jesus provides rest for them.² What Jesus sees troubles Him greatly. He does not see the needs of the people as interruptions. First, He sees their lack of clear direction. Second, He sees their need for healing. Third, He sees their hunger and fatigue. Jesus allows these needs to move Him to action. He responds to the people by teaching them and healing their diseases. And He calls for food to be given to those who have followed Him to this deserted place.

Jesus gives commands to prepare His disciples for the miracle, telling them to give the people something to eat. Craig Keener says, "despite Galilee's agricultural self-sufficiency, feeding this crowd in the villages would have been difficult. It would have taken more than two hundred days of an average person's wages to feed the multitude that had assembled."³ His instructions leave little doubt that the disciples are to take responsibility for the people. Jesus tells the disciples to go and see how many loaves they can find to feed the people. He takes the most common element among them, the bread, into His hands and begins breaking it, continuing as it multiplies. As to how the miracle was performed, Mark does not give us so much as a hint. He simply says that Jesus broke the loaves, divided the fish, and gave them to the disciples to distribute among the people.⁴

2 Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 673.

3 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 144.

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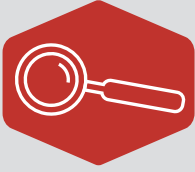


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

The chief purpose of Jesus was to help people. He fed the 5,000 because they were hungry. But Jesus also had another purpose. He was training a body of believers to be His disciples. Along with the countless hours Jesus spent teaching, lecturing, and dialoging with His followers, He also spent a great deal of time showing them how to minister. What lessons could the disciples have been learning from the teaching and actions of Jesus on the day He fed the five thousand with two small loaves and five fish? Consider these:

- God wants to work in the lives of people through His believers.
- Our own resources and strength will never be enough.
- When we give what we have to God, He will multiply and use it.
- Until we are thankful for what is not enough, what we have cannot be multiplied into more than enough.
- God knows what we need down to the smallest detail.



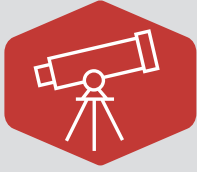
The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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 - » Where is this passage taking place?
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 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

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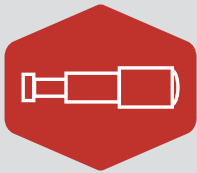
- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?
- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 24: Mark 6:45–56: Jesus Walks on Water and Heals

Main Idea: This lesson looks at how Jesus miraculously rescues His disciples and offers healing—two things He still wants to do for believers today.

Scripture: Mark 6:45–56



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Just after Jesus feeds the five thousand, He senses a need to be alone, so He goes up on a mountain to pray, sending the disciples ahead on a boat. There are only three occasions in this Gospel in which Jesus withdraws to pray, and each time some sort of crisis is involved: after the excitement and activity of a busy Sabbath in Capernaum (1:35), after the multiplication of the loaves (6:46), and in Gethsemane after the Lord's Supper (14:32–36). Each incident involves the temptation not to carry out God's mission for him—a mission that would ultimately bring suffering, rejection, and death.¹ The disciples' row for about nine hours, into the wee hours of the morning, using all their strength against the great wind that has quickly arisen. Although the lake is no more than five miles wide, the disciples have only gone half-way across.

Jesus sees His disciples under the attack of the sea and knows He has to do

¹ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 675.

something. He leaves His prayer sanctuary, heads down the mountain, and walks to them, for over two miles, directly on top of the water. The disciples, with adrenaline pumping as they struggle against the wind and water, see a figure walking on the water and cry out in fear, thinking they see a ghost. Craig Keener offers insight to Jesus passing by when he says, “the language of passing by may refer to how God’s glory passed by in the Old Testament (Exodus 33:19; Job 9:11), which also described God as treading upon the waves (Job 9:8).”² But then they hear the familiar voice of Jesus speaking to them.

When He crawls into their boat with them, the wind ceases. The lake is calmed. His disciples are amazed. Jesus has just miraculously walked on water and calmed the sea. He took control over the lake, which had become the enemy of His disciples. Since the disciples seemed to have an incomplete understanding of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus intentionally lays another great lesson on top of that miracle: He has all the power of God’s kingdom at His disposal, and as His disciples, so do they.

After they cross the lake, people are there who recognize Jesus. To the people living during Jesus’ time on earth, he is the embodiment of healing. As a good Jew, Jesus wore the fringes and tassels commanded by God (Numbers 15:37-39; Deuteronomy 22:12). Just touching the Jesus’ garments did not produce healing, it was the faith from the people who touched His garments. To touch Jesus means, for them, healing power will make them whole. The people are attracted to Jesus by this power to heal.

² Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 144.



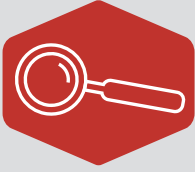
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

A healing environment has been created by the series of events in Galilee. The disciples are crying out for help and the answer comes in the form of a miracle. Jesus declares that the great I AM is here to take care of the situation.

The people of Gennesaret are trying to touch a live representative of God who has come into their presence. Most people feel a strong desire to protect themselves. The last thing the people in this passage want is to be sick or die. Jesus is the key to their miracle. Consider the following lessons:

- You can be in the middle of God's will and encounter storms.
- Jesus knows where you are and He is praying for you.
- Jesus comes close to us in the middle of our storm.
- In the middle of a storm, it is easy to forget or misunderstand who Jesus is.
- The purpose of faith and God's working in our life is so we might grow in our knowledge of His identity.
- Jesus is not put off by people coming to Him for what they need.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

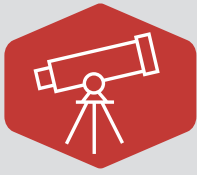
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 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe a time of personal struggle when Jesus came to you. How did He handle the lake that troubled you?

- Why do you think we do not have to be afraid in the midst of our situation?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

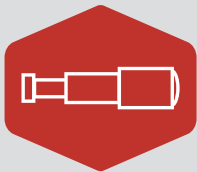
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 25: Mark 7:1–23: Inside Out

Main Idea: This lesson challenges you to consider at what point good traditions can turn bad and how to know what, in your life, really matters to God.

Scripture: Mark 7:1–23



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In these verses, Mark reveals a controversy between Jesus and the religious leaders of His day regarding dietary laws and ceremonial washing. Craig Keener says about traditions, “The Pharisees were known for observing the traditions of their predecessors; unwilling to innovate more than necessary, they grounded everything they could in tradition.”¹ Traditions have some good qualities, but there is also a dark side to them.

In this text, Jesus makes a startling statement. Mark records His words in verse 13: “Making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. . .” John states in Revelation that the Word of God stands forever (22:18–19). The Word of God is true by its own definition and merits. It is validated by itself and in itself. Yet Jesus tells the religious leaders that they have made the Word of God void. It appears what Jesus is saying is that their traditions have become the object of their faith. What that means is that they

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no longer actually seek God. Their desired end is to complete their external, traditional religious practices, rather than to please Him.

The Pharisees followed an oral version of Scribal law that had been passed down to them by tradition. The law was from the third century BC before the *Mishnah* was written. The particular oral law in question was one that considered the ceremonial washing of hands. This called for special water to be used for no other purpose. One and a half eggshells of water were poured over each hand while the hand was held with the fingers pointing upwards. The first hand would be used to clean the other and vice versa. Then each hand was held with fingers down and another one and a half eggshells of water poured over it. Failing to do this meant to be unclean and subject to the attacks of a demon. It meant being liable to poverty and destruction, or death in some cases. In essence, it meant failing in the service of God. The Pharisees felt so strongly about this that failing to do it meant the person was an infidel. They defined faith by the act of hand washing.

Jesus turns the accusation toward the Pharisees, making three basic charges. First, He accuses the Pharisees of being hypocrites. The word “hypocrite” (*hypokritēs*) means “play actor” and refers here to people whose worship is merely outward and not from the heart.² Second, He charges them with substituting human ingenuity for the laws of God. Third, He tells them their worship is vain and empty, citing words from Isaiah. Old Testament worship had to be carried out according to God’s prescription, but they had illegally amended the process to add their own tradition of hand washing.

Jesus uses a specific example to show their distortion of God’s law. The Pharisees were commanded by God to take care of their parents, using whatever resources they had. They owed a debt to God and to their parents, but they had kept back some of their money, refusing to give it to help their parents by claiming that the money had been dedicated to God. Their vow to God was used to avoid fulfilling the very commands God had given.

Jesus continues His reasoning regarding His disagreement with the Pharisees by telling a parable and applying it. The point of the parable is that what matters most to God is what goes on inside the heart, not the body, not the stomach. The Pharisees have been taught all their lives that certain foods are clean and certain foods are unclean. They have been taught not to touch anything dead or they will be defiled. But Jesus tells them that the rules that have lived by do not produce true holiness of heart and soul.

Jesus explains the parable to His disciples who do not get it. First, Jesus tells them that what they eat will not defile them because what a person eats does

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not come into contact with their heart—the control center of their soul and spirit. Second, Jesus tells them that food just passes through them. Jesus is not saying that a person should not watch what they ingest. He is driving home a point that there are graver issues than the kind of food a person puts in their body.

Jesus makes it clear that what defiles people is what is on the inside. He reminds His hearers that sins against God and others come from the heart and mind. These sins lead to defilement. Jesus then gives them a representative list of such sins.

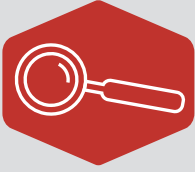


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What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

All of us develop traditions by doing certain things over and over until they become the norms that shape our lives. It is usually from our traditions that our values emerge. Traditions are not all bad; prayer, Bible reading, family celebrations, and habits that support physical health and financial stability are good to establish. People should develop and respect proven traditions. Traditions that uphold Christian virtues should become ingrained in the life of a family. However, one must be careful to make sure traditions do not turn into something bad by becoming an aim unto themselves. Consider these lessons from our passage:

- God's Word prescribes the way a believer must live to bring praise to Him.
- God's Word directs the believer to allow development of their own set of deep personal convictions.
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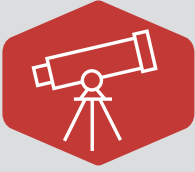
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- Why is it important to allow the Word of God to shape your beliefs and not solely your traditions?

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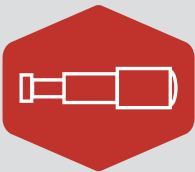
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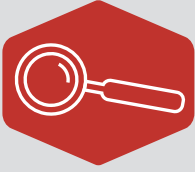


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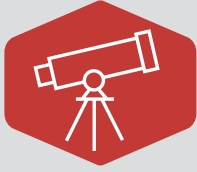
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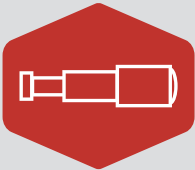
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- Mark 7:20-23. What happens because of an impure heart?
- Mark 7:22. Describe foolishness.



Lesson 26: Mark 7:24-30: Great Faith

Main Idea: The humble, persistent faith of a Gentile mother moves Jesus to action, bringing healing for her daughter and challenging the status quo.

Scripture: Mark 7:24-30



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Jesus wants to get away to a place where He is not known so he can get rest and instruct His disciples without interruption. He leads them approximately forty miles northwest from Capernaum to the coastal town of Tyre, which is in the southern part of what we know as Lebanon today. Tyre belonged to ancient Phoenicia. The most prominent woman from Phoenicia was a woman named Jezebel. There, He meets a woman with a big need and an even bigger faith.

Word spreads that Jesus is in Tyre, which is not a Jewish area. Jewish people did not expect much faith from this pagan region. A woman with a young daughter tortured by an unclean spirit hears about Jesus and does not stop until she finds Him, falling at His feet when she does.

The woman is of Greek descent and comes from the area where Jesus has come to be in seclusion with His disciples. She is a Gentile by Jewish definition. By nationality the woman was a Syrophenician. In those days

Phoenicia belonged administratively to Syria. So Mark probably used Syro-Phoenician to distinguish this woman from the Libyo-Phoenicians of North Africa.¹ Her plea to Jesus is that He would cast the demon out of her daughter. She is persistent in asking Jesus for this miracle. We are not told everything this woman knows about Jesus, but she knows enough to call Him by the messianic title “Son of David.”

Jesus’ response to her persistence in verse 27 could have been interpreted in two ways. First, that His purpose is to teach the disciples, and after He completes His teaching, He will minister to the crowd outside. Second, that Jesus has been sent to the Jews. He will teach the Jews first, and then the gospel message will go forth out of Jerusalem to reach the whole world. Either way, the bottom line appears to be that Jesus is telling the woman, “It is not your turn yet.”

Neither of these two interpretations cause the woman to go home and wait. Furthermore, she does not appear to be offended by Jesus’ words. Instead, she persists, using Jesus’ own analogy to bolster her case. She argues that when children are fed, little dogs play under the table and eat the crumbs dropped by the children when they eat. Craig Keener points out that “Jesus is saying that He will not heal like pagan magicians; he wants her to demonstrate faith, specifically faith in the supremacy of the true God.”² She will be quite happy to receive any crumbs she can on behalf of her daughter. This is the only story of healing in Mark’s gospel that Jesus performs from a distance.

What this woman says and how she says it greatly impresses Jesus, and He heals her daughter as a result. The woman had faith to believe and expressed that faith with heartfelt pleas to Jesus. There are only two people in the Gospels whom Jesus commends for having great faith. One is the Roman centurion. The other is the woman in this story. Contrast the commendation of this woman with the five times Jesus chides the disciples for their little faith (Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20).

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 682.

² Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 146.

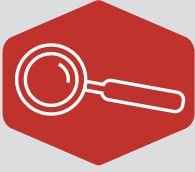


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

We are given stories in the Gospels that offer insight into our own responses to Jesus. Our actions and reactions to Jesus and His claims are related to these stories of real men and women who encountered Jesus. We are people of detail, and yet Mark does not give us many in this story because He is making the point that Jesus responded to the faith of this non-Jewish mother. Only one thing matters to this mother, seeing her child well and whole. She does not analyze the difference between her faith and the Jewish faith. She does not ask for Jesus' credentials. She has heard just enough about Jesus to go to Him. Consider these lessons from the passage:

- A person of great faith brings their problems to Jesus.
- A person with great faith is persistent in asking for Jesus' help.
- A person of great faith believes God will make an exception for them.
- A person with great faith is humble in approaching God.
- A person with great faith receives answers from God.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very caught up and 4 being not caught up, rate how caught up you tend to become in the analysis of a difficult situation. How can you improve?

- What are some things you can cultivate in your life that move Jesus to action?

- Describe a time in your life when you had to believe God for the impossible. What lessons did you learn?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 7:27. What does the word “children” refer to in this verse?

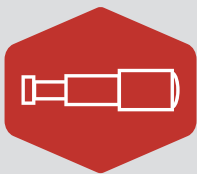
- Mark 7.27. What can this woman teach you about being persistent?



Lesson 27: Mark 7:31–37: Jesus Went Out of His Way

Main Idea: This lesson explores Jesus’ two-fold ministry and what it show us about the way He loves people today.

Scripture: Mark 7:31–37



The Author’s Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God’s Word.

This passage occurs at the end of a long journey for Jesus and His disciples. None of the other Gospel writers include this story. Mark includes it because it gives an account of another healing on Gentile territory, and this is its connection with the preceding story.¹ The purpose of this trip has been for Jesus to spend quality time with His disciples, to train and be with them. He takes them from Tyre to Sidon, about 20 miles north, and then takes them on a journey 150 miles south to the Decapolis on the east side of Galilee. Throughout Mark, Jesus maintains two pulpits, one where He preaches sermons to the masses of people and one where He trains His disciples. .

When Jesus arrives in the same region where He had delivered the demoniac of Gadara, He immediately draws a crowd. Among them is a man who is hearing impaired and can hardly speak. The people thrust the man upon Jesus for healing.

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 683.

Jesus takes him away from the crowd, with the goal to restore and make whole. With the man now better able to focus on Jesus, Jesus communicates with Him the only way He can. He touches the man's ears. He spits and uses the spit to touch the man's tongue. Overcome with compassion, Jesus speaks one Aramaic word which means, "Be opened." Immediately, the man's ears are opened, and His tongue is free. Certainly, Mark must have had Isaiah 35:6 in mind, which is a poetical description of the Messianic Age: "Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb [*mogilalos*] shout for joy."²

Jesus desires the crowd to keep quiet about what has happened, but the people do not remain quiet. They are astonished beyond measure, indicated by the Greek adverb *hyperperissos*, used only here in the New Testament. This is a great crowd response that Jesus and His disciples encounter in their ministry. For Mark, the significance of this miracle in this Gentile region, is a sign of the messianic activity of Jesus.

² Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 683.

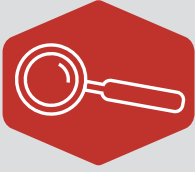


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

This passage shows us the pastoral ministry of Jesus. Mark describes Jesus' ministry to His disciples and Jesus' ministry to a man who was hearing and speech impaired. Jesus was living on mission. A person cannot read the Gospels without knowing Jesus loves people. Consider these lessons:

- Jesus goes out of His way.
- Jesus is sensitive with hurting people.
- Jesus communicates in a way that a hurting man can understand.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

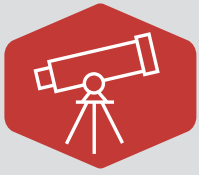
How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- Describe a time when you were shown the love and gentleness of Christ. What lessons did you learn?
- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not well, rate how well you communicate with people in a way they can understand. How can you improve this?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

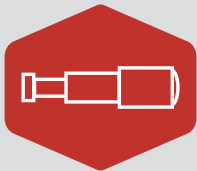
- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?
- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 28: Mark 8:1-21 What Leavens Your Life

Main Idea: This lesson explores Jesus' miraculous provision of bread for a crowd and His choice not to give the Pharisees what they demand, instead using the moment to teach important truth.

Scripture: Mark 8:1-21



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Bread was a basic staple in their diet. The major theme of this passage is bread and is a parallel passage to Mark 6 and 7. Look at the following chart:

Scripture	Description	Scripture
Mark 6:31-44	Feeding the Multitude	Mark 8:1-9
Mark 6:45-56	Crossing Galilee	Mark 8:10
Mark 7:1-23	Conflict with the Pharisees	Mark 8:11-13
Mark 7:24-30	Conversation about Bread	Mark 8:14-21

Jesus performed about eighteen different healing miracles. Most of these miracles were not repeated but were one of a kind. However, the first part of this text repeats one of Jesus' most famous wonders: multiplying a small amount of food to feed an entire crowd of hungry followers. Jesus has been teaching for three days in the Decapolis, which is a Gentile region. Jesus' compassion for the people around Him is strong. The word Mark uses for compassion gives the sense of Jesus being affected in the deepest part of His body by the crowd of people gathered to hear Him teach.

Mark is clear that the disciples did not learn the lesson Jesus taught about Himself in the process of feeding the the five thousand in Mark 6. Instead of asking Jesus, "What do you want us to do to help feed the crowd?" the disciples conclude that there is not enough bread to feed the crowd. It appears the disciples do not have a level of compassion equal to that of their teacher.

So, Jesus gives the disciples another object lesson. He asks a question similar to the one God asks Moses in Exodus 4:2: "What is that in your hand?" The disciples have come up with seven loaves, which were flat pieces of bread about the size of a pita used for a gyro. But there are four thousand men, plus women and children. Jesus instructs the crowd to form groups, as He did in the feeding of the five thousand. He takes the seven loaves of bread, and He gives thanks, which indicates a finished action. He then breaks the bread, which again indicates a finished action. Jesus then proceeds to give and keep on giving the bread to His disciples for them to distribute. Jesus just keeps on giving and giving, and there is enough food for everyone there.

This miracle varies somewhat from the feeding of the five thousand. The word used for basket in Mark 6:43 indicates small baskets big enough to carry a lunch for one or two people. A *spyris* is a large basket—Paul was lowered from the wall of Damascus in one (Acts 9:25)—whereas a *kophinos* is a wicker basket in which Jews ordinarily carried their food when journeying.¹ The point of this section is that there are seven huge amounts of food gathered, which is a true abundance.

Mark then moves to a part of the story where the intent of the Pharisees is made clear by their actions. The word "question" used here indicates a debate or argument. The word is *peirazō*, and in this context it probably should be translated "tempt"² The Pharisees are not there to learn from Jesus but to entrap Him.

Why does Jesus not give them a sign when He could have easily done so? In

¹ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 687.

² Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 688.

Scripture, a miracle is never identified as a sign. The Pharisees are not looking for a miracle. In fact, in Mark 3:22, the Pharisees find a way to solve the whole idea of Jesus doing miracles. Mark records several miracles the Pharisees witness Jesus perform exercising power over an evil spirit, healing the sick and raising the dead, restoring the lame, multiplying food to feed thousands, and wielding power over nature. But what the Pharisees want is a sign that will predict the future, an indisputable sign from God of the deity of Jesus.

Mark again shows the emotion of Jesus, saying He “sighed deeply.” The word *anastenazō*, found only here in the NT, is used. It describes Jesus’ grief and disappointment when faced with the unbelief of those who, because of their spiritual privileges, ought to have been more responsive to him.³ The Pharisees have had many opportunities to believe but they do not. Matthew shares some insight when he records Jesus saying that the only sign that will be given to the Pharisees from that moment on will be the sign of Jonah—the resurrection of Jesus.

Next Mark moves to another section of the story where Jesus and the disciples are getting in a boat. Jesus again shares an object lesson with them about the event that has just occurred, talking about the “yeast of the Pharisees.” The Pharisees had wanted a sign from heaven, but Jesus refused to give them one. As a result, they now want to kill Jesus and destroy His ministry.

Jesus’ message to His disciples is to watch out for the way the doctrine of the Pharisees can spread and grow just like leaven, or yeast, permeates bread. In those days before commercially available yeast, a piece of dough would be pulled away from the loaf prior to baking. This pinched-off piece would be saved to add to the dough mix the next time bread was made. However, the portion had to be stored carefully and could easily become toxic. Craig Keener says about this lesson, “the point here seems to be that it is something that spreads. Both Pharisaic piety and Herod as an agent of political power are corrupting influences.”⁴ Jesus teaches His disciples to be careful of the Pharisees’ toxic doctrine.

³ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 688.

⁴ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 148.

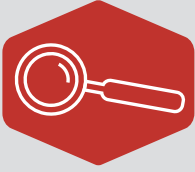


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Obviously, Jesus was concerned that His disciples train their minds to think like He thought. Jesus wanted them to see a situation, remember what He taught them, and apply the truth to that situation just as He would if He were there. Within the scenes of this passage are essential truths that must be caught. The heart is at stake, and anytime the heart is at stake is a serious matter. Consider these lessons:

- Jesus has a heart of compassion for people.
- Jesus has creative power to meet needs.
- Jesus exceeds the demands of people.
- Jesus is the Bread of Life.
- Jesus wants believers to guard their hearts against things He hates.
- Jesus warns believers that sin is deadliest when it is most quiet.
- Jesus wants believers to have a heart that is sensitive to His words and work.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

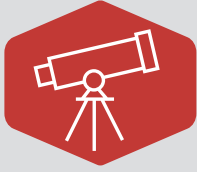
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe a time in your life when Jesus supplied what you needed.

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very much and 4 being not very much, rate how much your heart is moved with compassion for people who walk in unbelief? How can you improve?

- Write out at least seven verses that are promises about God's supply for your life. What did you glean from these verses?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 8:2. What are two things you can glean about compassion?

- Mark 8:15. In the New Testament, what does leaven symbolize?

- Mark 8:15. What does the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod represent?

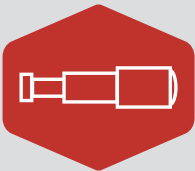
- Mark 8:15. What type of yeast should believers avoid today?



Lesson 29: Mark 8:22–33: Can You See Anything?

Main Idea: Jesus' healing of a blind man and His questions to His disciples challenge us to consider what it really means—and what it takes—to see clearly.

Scripture: Mark 8:22–33



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This lesson is a watershed moment in Mark. The first half of Mark's Gospel answers the question, "Who is Jesus?" The disciples have walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus, watched Jesus, and heard Jesus for two and a half years. They are now six months away from the cross, and Jesus moves the question from "Who do *they* say that I am?" to the more important one of, "Who do *you* say that I am?" And Mark, in these last chapters, begins to answer the question, "What did *Jesus* come to do?"

This passage is about spiritual blindness. Mark tells about Jesus healing a blind man physically to highlight the need for spiritual sight to see what God is doing. Mark begins the passage with Jesus and His disciples in Bethsaida, on the northeast coast of the Lake of Galilee, where Peter, Andrew, and Philip grew up. This will be the last miracle Jesus does in Galilee. Jesus makes physical contact with a blind man. Mark talks a lot about Jesus touching

people, recording at least eleven instances where Jesus makes physical contact with a person in need. He leads the blind man out of the city to heal him using spit—the second time Jesus uses saliva to heal someone. Craig Keener says, “Some sources suggest that spittle was sometimes associated with healing; it was also often considered disgusting and may have tested the blind man’s desire to be healed.”¹ A chapter earlier in Mark, Jesus heals a deaf and mute man by touching his tongue with spit. At the time, it was commonly believed that spit could have healing power. Jesus may have chosen to use saliva to accelerate their faith.

The man in this passage receives some vision, but it is not clear. This is the only gospel account of gradual healing. This man needed a second touch from Jesus’ hand to give him clear vision. Perhaps Jesus is teaching His disciples the process of enlightenment, of coming to a full understanding of the truth. Jesus is performing a parable, a story in action, to teach the disciples that their eyes of spiritual understanding had been at least partially opened, but their faith is not complete. The disciples have encountered Jesus, but it will take the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and coming of the Holy Spirit to give them clear spiritual understanding.

The disciples have not yet been brought to full understanding Jesus’ identity and the cross. He has six months to get them ready for things they haven’t dreamed of. To do so, Jesus takes them to a pagan, Gentile region twenty-five miles north of Bethsaida to the region of Caesarea Philippi. Herod Philip, the son of Herod the Great, was given this area to rule and reign, and it had become a center for pagan worship, a spot hallowed by the Romans during this time.

The major deity worshipped in this region was Pan, who had the legs of an animal and the upper torso of a man. It is against this backdrop of pagan gods that Jesus asks, “Who do people say that I am?” The disciples’ immediate reply to Jesus’ question is that there is confusion about His identity. They give Jesus the three most common answers to His question.

Then, Jesus asks them a second question: “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answers, “You are *the* Christ.” This is a title, not a name. A title signifies position, place, and authority. Christ is equal to the Old Testament title of Messiah. Peter is describing Jesus as the Accepted One and the Able One. This same story in Matthew 16:13–17 offers an additional important detail: Jesus declares that Peter did not get this revelation on his own but from God.

Then in verses 31–32, Jesus begins to tell His reason for coming into the world. He will say the same words again before He goes to the cross, yet His disciples

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 148.



never get it. However, Peter starts to realize that what he had envisioned for the future is completely different from what Jesus is saying. Jesus tells Peter that he has been thinking from a wrong mindset, not in accord with God's will. Peter does not see with spiritual eyes but is blinded by his own desire, which keeps him from seeing what Jesus is doing.

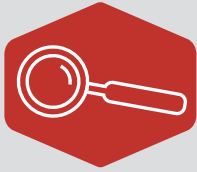


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Mark helps the reader see that Jesus cares for people when they hurt. However, his care for people does not keep Him from exposing anything that keeps us from being His faithful disciples. His love and forgiveness for people is unconditional, but His demands on His disciples are unequivocal. This passage is about spiritual blindness. Consider these lessons:

- Spiritual vision begins with coming to Jesus.
- Unless a person admits they are spiritually blind, they will never see clearly.
- Spiritual vision is corrected by means of community.
- Spiritual vision comes from Jesus and requires His repeated touch.
- There are some spiritual truths that believers will never know except by fresh revelation.
- The place where you are serving may not always be easy.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
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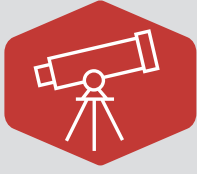
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe who Jesus is to you.

- Why is community vital for correct spiritual vision?

- Read Colossians 2:8. What can you glean from Paul about our plans that are different from the plan of God?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 8:25. What can you glean about the healing from Bethsaida?

- Mark 8:33. What is the significance of Jesus' statement, "Get thee behind me Satan?"

Lesson 30: Mark 8:34-38: Jesus' Altar Call

Main Idea: This lesson explores what discipleship to Jesus offers and what it costs, encouraging believers to weigh their choice before committing to follow Him.

Scripture: Mark 8:34-38

The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This passage from Mark, paralleled in Matthew 16 and Luke 9, is the pinnacle of Jesus' teaching. Jesus and the disciples are still in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Only six months remain before He will be crucified. Jesus tells His disciples and the crowd of people with them to count the long-term costs of following Him. Then He brings those following Him close so He can ask them some very difficult questions.

Mark gives three initial requirements for anyone wanting to follow Jesus. First, Mark tells readers they must deny themselves. This is a life of self-denial. The phrase "deny himself" in Greek is considered strong language, conveying a sense of disowning oneself. It carries the idea of having nothing to do with the former life, sinful activity, or prideful behavior.

Second, Mark tells readers to "take up one's cross." It is interesting that the word "cross" is preceded by a personal possessive pronoun. Craig Keener provides good insight when he states, "To *take the* cross was to carry the horizontal beam of the cross out to the site of execution, generally past spectators, often a jeering mob."¹ The indication is that the cross of Jesus must be personally adopted by the believer as their

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 149.

own. Jesus is telling His disciples that if they choose to follow Him, they must follow to the cross. God's purpose must become our purpose for living.

Third, Mark tells his readers they must choose to follow Him as His disciple. The progression Mark lays out for following Jesus is to adopt His interests, then adopt His purpose, and then adopt His discipleship process. Discipleship includes receiving instruction, adopting a new lifestyle, and proclaiming a new message.

Mark discusses the paradox of following Jesus. In verses 35-38, he begins each verse with the word "for." Two of these verses are statements and two are questions. Each is intended to help a believer count the cost of becoming a disciple of Jesus. The first verse is asking the question, "What is a life worth?" In other words, what gauge or measuring standard is used to determine the value of someone's life? The second verse asks the question, "What is the worth of a human soul?" Every soul has eternal value and will exist forever in either heaven or hell. The third question is, "What is the exchange rate for the human soul?" Perhaps Jesus' hearers recall the exchange between Esau and Jacob over the birthright that belonged to Esau (Genesis 25:27-34). Esau loses for all his offspring the privilege of being in the lineage of Jesus. He sells his future and the future of all his generations for a simple bowl of soup. Mark wants Roman Christians who are faced with persecution and trials to be able to answer the final question. The final question is, "What is the value of a good testimony?" The following chart is a good summary of this passage of scripture.

<i>Nature of the Law</i>	<i>Time Perspective</i>	<i>Component of Mind</i>	<i>Mind of Man</i>	<i>Mind of Christ</i>
Psychological	Present	Motives	Self	Take up your cross
Physical	Future	Aims	Security	Lose your life
Economic	Eternal	Values	Success	Gain your soul
Spiritual	Ultimate	Goal	Status	Glorify your God ²

My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God’s Word is saying to you today.

Many people do not want to know what things really cost. We live month to month, paycheck to paycheck, even day to day without considering the long-term costs of our decisions. As an example, if you purchase a house for \$100,000 but finance \$95,000 of that amount at 6.5% for 30 years, the total cost for just principle and interest

² David L. McKenna and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, [Mark](#), vol. 25, The Preacher’s Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1982), 175.

repayment of that loan will actually be \$216,170—more than twice the original cost of the house. Mark wants readers to stop and ask themselves some very difficult questions before they follow Jesus. Questions such as, “Am I really ready to embark on this path with Jesus?” and, “What is the real cost of being His disciple?” Consider the following:

- The price of following Jesus means to quit making self the object of one’s life.
- The paradox of following Jesus means when you lose your life you gain life.
- The preview of forsaking Jesus means to take away all excuses for taking up your cross.

The Holy Spirit's Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - ⇒ Who appears in this passage?
 - ⇒ Where is this passage taking place?
 - ⇒ When is this passage occurring?
 - ⇒ Why is this passage important?
 - ⇒ What is happening in this passage?
 - ⇒ How does this passage apply to my life?
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.
- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- When you hear or read the words "disown yourself," what comes to mind?
- If you believe that a soul that sins will die, what momentary sin is worth having your soul burn in hell for eternity?
- What are some ways you show how much it matters to you to stay right with God?
- Describe in your own words what being a disciple of Jesus means to you.

Upward and Outward Focus

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?
- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.
- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?

Using My FireBible

Read the study notes for the following verses in the *FireBible* and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 8.34. What does it mean to deny self?
- Mark 8.34. Describe battles against sin.
- Mark 8:34. Describe battles against Satan.
- Mark 8.34. Describe battles against the world.
- Mark 8.38. Describe Jesus' thoughts about the world system.



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 8:2. What are two things you can glean about compassion?

- Mark 8:15. In the New Testament, what does leaven symbolize?

- Mark 8:15. What does the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod represent?

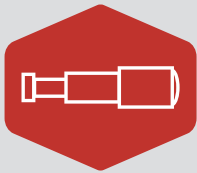
- Mark 8:15. What type of yeast should believers avoid today?



Lesson 31: Mark 9:1-13: A Glimpse of Jesus' Glory

Main Idea: Some of Jesus' disciples get a glimpse of His glory in an encounter that challenges their understanding and shapes their faith, just as it does for believers today.

Scripture: Mark 9:1-13



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This story is referenced in three of the four Gospels and in 2 Peter. About six months remain in Jesus' earthly ministry. The final miracle Jesus does in the region of Galilee is in Mark 8, the healing of a man who is blind. Jesus wants to spend time with His disciples getting them prepared for what will happen six months down the road when He is crucified, so He takes them away from Galilee and the crowd to the area known as Caesarea Philippi, a Gentile area where the Roman gods are worshipped.

Both Old and New Testament men and women had epiphanic manifestations that bolstered and confirmed their faith in God. Craig Keener states, "Transformation or transfiguration appears in both Greek myth and Jewish apocalyptic literature, but the most obvious background of Jesus' transformation here must be Moses' glorification on Mount Sinai."¹ In this

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), pg. 149.

passage, Mark tells readers that Jesus is transfigured, His appearance changed from the inside out. Jesus is giving expression to His inner character. His face glows and His clothing is filled with light. The Greek word used is *metamorphoō* which means “to change into another form” and is used only here, in the parallel in Matthew 17:2, and in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18, where it describes the believer’s progressive change into the moral likeness of Christ.²

It has been suggested that Moses and Elijah come to talk with Jesus and prepare Him for the crucifixion (Luke 9:30–31). But Peter interrupts the conversation between them to suggest building three tabernacles. He may have been babbling because he did not know what to say and was frightened—everything he had learned growing up would have led him to believe that such an encounter would leave him dead.

Mark paints a vivid picture for his readers of a light, radiant cloud that overshadows them. The cloud is the Shekinah, the visible sign of God’s presence (Exodus 19:9; 24:15; 34:5; Revelation 1:7; 14:4). The OT background of verse 7 lies in the passages where the cloud is “the vehicle of God’s presence (Exodus 16:10; 19:9; 24:15f.; 33:9; Leviticus 16:2; Numbers 11:25), the abode of His glory, from which He speaks.”³

A voice comes from the cloud directing the disciples to listen to Jesus. The disciples probably feel their spiritual understanding is being severely challenged.

While the disciples are in a spiritual stupor, they talk with each other, trying to figure out what is happening. But this brings them no closer to understanding what is taking place. In their confusion, they come to Jesus for help. He tells them they are correct in thinking that Elijah must come first. Then He turns the discussion to His favorite topic—His suffering. He makes it clear that Elijah came and finished his work before being horribly treated by the religious leaders of his day. The same will be true for Him.

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 699.

³ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 699.

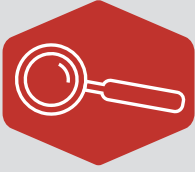


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Biblical and church history teach us that God has chosen a number of unique ways to reveal Himself. In the account of the transfiguration of Jesus, He removes His human appearance long enough for three disciples to see His inner glory expressed on the outside. Peter refers to this event twenty to twenty-five years later when he writes, in effect, that what they saw on the mountain, the world is going to see in the clouds. (2 Peter 1:16-18). Consider the following:

- When we are in God's presence, we may want to talk but He wants us to listen.
- When we are in God's presence, we may want to work but He wants us to worship.
- When we are in God's presence, we may want to stay but He wants us to work.
- When we are in God's presence, we may want to figure God out but He wants us to walk by faith.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

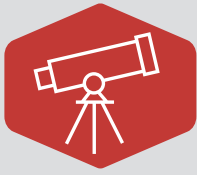
 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

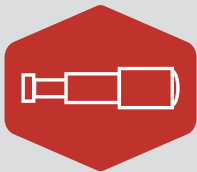
- Mark 9:13. Describe the relationship between John and Elijah.



Lesson 32: Mark 9:14-29: All Things are Possible

Main Idea: The disciples learn a valuable lesson about prayer that still applies today, as Jesus heals a boy possessed by a demon.

Scripture: Mark 9:14-29



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In this passage, Jesus gives a series of lessons, and the passage is bookended by lessons on faith. Mark tells this story right after the transfiguration of Jesus, and it is a story that deals with the demonic. Look at these contrasts between the stories:

Transfiguration	Valley
Happens on the mountain	Happens in the valley
Glory is revealed	Suffering is taking place
God dominates scene	Demonically dominated
Father is pleased	Father is tortured
Perfect Son	Perverted son
Holy wonder	Unholy terror

The story begins with Jesus asking His disciples what they are discussing with the Scribes. But before the disciples can answer, a man whose mute son is possessed by a spirit speaks out from the crowd to say that he brought his son to the disciples, but they could not help him. In response, Jesus asks two rhetorical questions. First, “How long shall I be with you?” And second, “How long shall I put up with you?” How is it that the disciples could cast out demons before but now they are no longer able to do so? Jesus is asking, “How did you go from effectively exercising the authority I gave you by faith to now being ineffective?” Van der Loos (*Miracles of Jesus*, p. 399) says, “It is not too bold to presume that during the absence of Jesus and His three intimates, a spirit of unbelief and laxity had overcome the disciples, perhaps partly as a result of conversations between them, leading to their impotence.”¹ He is frustrated.

Jesus spends time adjusting the father’s “if” clause. The question was not whether Jesus had the power to heal the boy but whether the father had faith to believe Jesus could.² Then Jesus asks to see the boy. We are not told anything about his mother but only that his father brings the boy to Jesus. When the boy sees Jesus, the evil spirit throws him into a convulsion. Matthew describes the boy as a lunatic and insane. The evil spirit intends to break, shatter, and crack into tiny fragments this boy who is in the presence of Jesus. But Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit. He touches the boy and raises him from the ground, healing him.

Then Jesus takes His disciples to a private place for some teaching, and they ask Jesus why they could not cast out the demon from the boy. It was because they had not prayerfully depended on God’s power, Jesus says. Craig Keener points out a reason why Jesus could have waited until He had His disciples

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 702-703.

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 703.

alone to train them. He said, “In a culture dominated by honor and shame, rebukes and admissions of failure were also better carried out in private.”³ Apparently, they had taken for granted the power given them or had come to believe that it was inherent in themselves. So, they no longer depended prayerfully on God for it, and their failure showed their lack of prayer.⁴ They were trying to do God’s work without the essential power that only comes from staying connected to God by prayer.

³ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 150.

⁴ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 704.

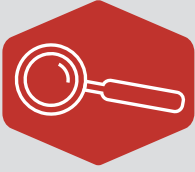


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

In this passage, the disciples are doing what they had been commissioned to do. They are certainly doing what they have seen Jesus do. There is no indication that the disciples used the wrong methods to help the boy. Jesus does not correct His disciples for saying or doing the wrong thing. He gets onto them for their lack of prayer. What you believe about God and His willingness and ability to work in your situation determines what you receive from Him. Consider these lessons:

- Jesus hears the voice of a desperate father.
- Jesus hears the voice of the disciples in dilemma.
- In the face of a critical incident, disciples can only be effective if they have spiritual power.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

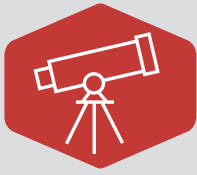


- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe your daily prayer time.

- How much faith does it take to fulfill Mark 9:23?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very strong and 4 being not very strong, rate how strong your faith is. What can you do to strengthen it?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God’s Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 9:19. What are two things you can glean from this note?

- Mark 9:23. What does “all things” not mean?

- Mark 9:23. How does one receive the faith needed to do God’s will?

- Mark 9:24. What are two things you can glean about unbelief?

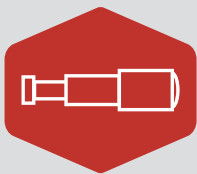
- Mark 9:29. Write in your own words Jesus’ principle.



Lesson 33: Mark 9:30–41: When Less is More

Main Idea: This lesson explores several critical lessons about the value of humility for those seeking to live as citizens of God's kingdom.

Scripture: Mark 9:30–41



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This section of Mark is a series of lessons on humility. Jesus repeats His teaching about the cross. He wants to make sure the disciples get what He is trying to share with them. Three times in Mark 9 Jesus gives this clear message. In Mark 9:1 He tells the disciples the kingdom of God is coming in power. In Mark 9:9 He tells them the Son of Man will rise from the dead. And in Mark 9:31 Jesus again tells the disciples that the Son of Man is going to rise from the dead. He is giving them hope as He teaches about the cross and the resurrection. Even though the disciples do not understand, they are being trained to believe that somehow what is going to happen is God's will.

Jesus' home base is Peter's house in Capernaum where He and His disciples are spending a few days. He is teaching them privately and asks them a question based on their discussion while on the road to Capernaum. The disciples had hidden this conversation from Jesus because of its content. However, though it was out of range of Jesus' physical hearing, it was not out of range of His spiritual discernment.

In this teaching moment, Jesus is ready to help the disciples discover a truth about the kingdom of God: The path to greatness is marked by service. To demonstrate the truth of what He is teaching, Jesus stands, picks up a child, and turns to His disciples. Black makes the suggestion that since the words “child” and “servant” represent one word in Aramaic, we have here a picture parable.¹ He is still most likely at Peter’s house, which would have had at least three generations living in it. In the definition of household roles, small children would be in the charge of a grandmother, aunt, or older sister. The men would leave the household early in the day to pursue their labor. They would have loved their children deeply but would have entrusted their daily care to others in the household. Very rarely would a man be expected to provide this kind of care to his own small children.

The key to understanding the application Jesus is trying to make is the word “receive.” This verb means to welcome, receive, or embrace. It can also mean to take with the hand, to take hold, or take up. The point Jesus makes to His disciples is to seek to serve those who, like small children, cannot in any way repay with either money or influence.

Then Mark moves to another lesson on humility. John brings Jesus what he believes is an alarming report. John and some other disciples saw someone else casting out demons in Jesus’ name. Because this person was not part of the twelve or those close to them, John thought they should stop this person. Jesus responds with another important lesson: The one who is for Jesus will minister in His name and in same miraculous way He does.

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 706.

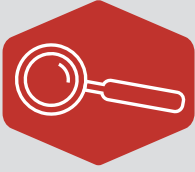


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Our world knows little of humility. Humility is foreign to fallen humanity. The world sees as the solution to every situation thinking more highly of yourself and thinking about yourself more. Most people have a natural desire to be the greatest, or at least greater. But Jesus calls us to humility. Humility is the most obvious Christlike character. Learning to walk in humility leads to the greatest possible blessing from God in our life. Consider these lessons:

- To grow in humility, believers must grow in their understanding of the cross.
- To grow in humility, believers must avoid unhealthy comparisons.
- To grow in humility, believers must serve others who can do nothing in return.
- To grow in humility, believers must celebrate God's blessing on others who are ministering in Jesus' name.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

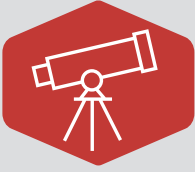
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Read the following verses: Isaiah 66:2; Micah 6:8; Luke 14:11 and 18:14; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12; and James 4:6-7,10. What did you glean about humility?

- Describe a time in your life when you compared yourself to someone else. What were the results?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very hard and 4 being not hard, rate yourself on how hard it is to serve someone who cannot do anything in return for you. How can you improve?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

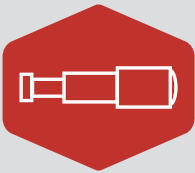
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 34: Mark 9:42–50: Dealing with the / in Sin

Main Idea: This lesson explores what Jesus says regarding sin and its consequences, particularly its impact upon others, challenging believers to pursue holiness.

Scripture: Mark 9:42–50



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This passage of Scripture is one of the most startling and powerful directives against sin that Jesus makes. The passage can be divided into two areas. The first is having a radical concern for others and their purity. The second area is a radical consecration of ourselves. Not many other statements in the Gospels sound like the one Jesus makes here. He is saying, “You want to know what I take seriously? If you cause one person who believes in Me to stumble, physical death will be better than what you are going to experience.” Craig Keener says, “Stumble was often used metaphorically to refer to sinning or falling away from the true faith.”¹ Jesus uses the word “millstone” to describe what is going to happen to such a person. “Millstone” comes from two Greek words, “mule” and “stone” and indicates the kind of grinding stone to which a mule would be hitched to grind wheat into flour. The offense of causing someone to stumble was so serious, Jesus told His hearers, it would be better

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 152.

for them to drown. Keener has a powerful insight to this. He says, “Death without burial (including death at sea) was regarded as the worst kind of death; pagans even believed that the spirit of the deceased hovered eternally over the waters where the person had died.”²

A believer should take care to avoid stumbling in their personal walk with Jesus. Mark mentions three parts of the body that might cause a person to stumble: The hand, which is the part of our body that carries out the action of sin; the foot, which carries a person to the place of sin; and the eye, which provides the initial stimulus that causes the feet and hands to act. Mark admonishes the believer to “cut it off.” This is not literal. What Jesus is teaching is the need for a radical dealing with sin in the heart of a believer.

In verse 43, 45, and 47, Mark refers to the person who does not deal radically with sin as being in danger of being lost and judged to spend eternity in hell. The word Mark uses for hell is the word *Gehenna*. Gehenna, also called the Valley of Hinnom, was located to the south of Jerusalem. It was at one time a suburb of Jerusalem. It was the place, prior to the reign of Josiah, where children were burned in sacrifice to Molech, a heathen god. By Jeremiah’s day, it was known as the Valley of Slaughter and the Valley of Topeth (drums). Some speculate that drums may have been beaten in this valley to drown out the cries of the children being burned. Josiah defiled the place, turning it into a dump where refuse would be piled and burned, and no one would sacrifice there ever again.

Mark then writes a series of three proverbs. Mark 8:31-9:50 is a discipleship manual where one subject leads to the next. He concludes this section with three short sayings without explanation. He talks about salt. In the Old Testament salt is a marker for a covenant made. It is also part of the offerings made to God. In fact, to make an offering acceptable on the altar of sacrifice, salt must be added to it. Whether a grain offering or a meat offering, salt makes the offering acceptable to God.

Salt in that day was sometimes mixed with small quantities of other chemicals, such as gypsum. However, too much gypsum could render the salt worthless. Likewise, when a disciple tries to mix their life as a member of God’s kingdom with the kingdom of the world, they lose their “saltiness,” their ability to be what salt is supposed to be. Jesus refers to the life of a disciple as an offering to Him, which means people will be able to watch the life of a disciple and know they are a follower of Jesus. Jesus is warning his disciples not to lose that characteristic in them that brings life to the world and prevents its decay.³

² Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 152.

³ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 709.

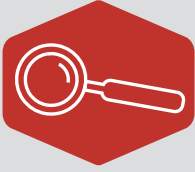


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

The best thing to do is to encourage others in their Christian walk. The worst thing to do is to cause a believer to stumble. The idea is that if we stumble, we are sure to become stumbling blocks to others. If we sin, we might very well entice others to sin. Consider the following lessons:

- The grace of God does not neglect the pursuit of holiness in the life of the believer.
- Believers do not have the right to think only about themselves.
- Believers are responsible to be concerned about other's spiritual well-being.
- Nothing is too great to give up or forgo, if it causes a believer to sin.
- A believer's salvation is demonstrated by a growing desire to please God and eradicate sin from their life.
- If one does not deal with sin, they end up in the garbage dump.
- When a believer consecrates their life to Jesus, it becomes an offering or sacrifice to Him.



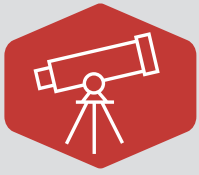
The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 9:42. What are two observations you make from this note?

- Mark 9:43. What are two observations you make from this note?

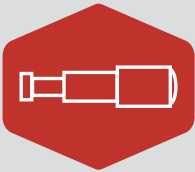
- Mark 9:49. What are two ways that believers are salted with fire?



Lesson 35: Mark 10:1-12: A Soft Heart

Main Idea: Jesus tackles the problem behind the problem of divorce with insight that goes straight to the heart of the matter.

Scripture: Mark 10:1-12



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Jesus completed His ministry in Galilee and He is moving closer to Jerusalem where He will die. Jesus and His disciples are in the region of Herod Antipas who had John the Baptist beheaded. Herod Antipas had divorced his wife and taken his brother's wife. John the Baptist was beheaded because he had confronted Herod, saying, "It is not right for you to have your brother's wife." In this passage of Mark, the Pharisees may be thinking that since they are in Herod Antipas' region, they can get Jesus to say something about divorce, prompting Herod to kill Jesus like he did John the Baptist.

Jesus is in a conversation with the Pharisees, whose aim is to trick Him into saying something that will contradict the law. The Pharisees agreed that divorce was allowed. What they wanted Jesus' opinion on was the grounds for divorce. The text in question is Deuteronomy 24:1 (ESV) "When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house." What did indecency include? They are trying to get Jesus to say

something about divorce that will hurt his popularity. They are not thinking biblically as they ask their question. Instead, they are thinking about two differing views that cause controversy over the issue. The Pharisees want to know what Jesus thinks.

The Pharisees point out that Moses allowed for a bill of divorce to be given when marriages were broken. But Jesus directs them back to the beginning of Creation when He made male and female. Mark uses the words “hold fast” to indicate what should happen in a marriage. Jesus reminds them that a man should pursue, cleave, grab, and hang on to his wife. The implication is that two people will use all their effort and energy to grab on and keep hanging on to one another. Jesus reminds the listeners that marriage requires the maximum effort of hanging on to one another. This reply must have startled the Pharisees. The rabbis mistook God’s gracious provision in allowing divorce as his approval of it.¹ Jesus goes straight to the real problem: the hardness of their hearts. The word “heart” refers to the center of operations in a person’s life. It is the center of spiritual activity and the seat of conscience. Jesus is saying their hearts are obstinate, stubborn, unwilling to receive instruction, divided between obedience and disobedience, and darkened in foolish thinking.

Jesus recognized that a man could commit adultery against his wife. In rabbinic Judaism a woman by infidelity could commit adultery against her husband; and a man, by having sexual relations with another man’s wife, could commit adultery against him. But a man could never commit adultery against his wife, no matter what he did.² With this response, Jesus made both husband and wife morally equal. By doing so, Jesus raised the status of women.

1 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 711.

2 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 712.

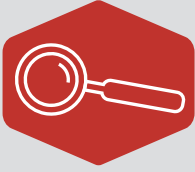


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

No single lesson can adequately address the uniqueness of each marriage. But it is pretty safe to say no one wants their marriage to fail. After all, it is the closest possible relationship two people can have, the sharing of body, soul, and spirit. No one wants to share with another at that deep level and then lose that person. However, sinful human nature always tends to negotiate the maximum selfish gain for minimum personal cost. This is no way to approach marriage. In contrast, a person filled with God's love is not thinking in minimums. They want to do all they can to follow, love, and obey Him from their heart—and this directly plays out in their marriage. Consider these lessons:

- Marriage is one man and one woman.
- Marriage is the uniting of two people.
- Marriage is a work of God accompanied by human effort



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
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 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

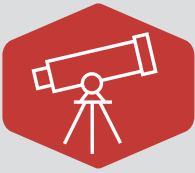
- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very soft and 4 being hard, how soft is your heart? What steps can you take in order to make sure your heart is soft?

- What is your plan to guard your heart?

- What are some ways you continue to pursue your spouse?

- If you are not married, what type of standards will you have as you seek God's will for a spouse?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

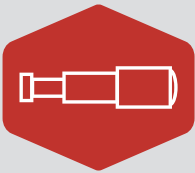
- Mark 10:11. What can you glean from this note?



Lesson 36: Mark 10:13–16: Bringing Children to Jesus

Main Idea: This lesson explores the difference between how the disciples and Jesus react when some parents bring their children to Him, and what it means for everyone.

Scripture: Mark 10:13–16



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

From Mark 8:31 to Mark 10:12, a lot of serious dialogue is happening. Jesus is about six months from the cross, and His goal is to prepare His disciples for what is ahead. Undoubtedly the disciples have picked up on the new, very serious tone of Jesus' words and demeanor.

Almost without warning, a group of parents come bringing their children toward Jesus. They have heard of His power. The Talmud indicates that it was common for parents to bring their children to a rabbi and for the rabbi to pray three things for them. First, that they would be famous in the law (Genesis-Deuteronomy). Second, that they would be faithful in their marriage. Third, that they would be known for their good works. Perhaps these parents grabbed up their children and ran to Jesus in the hope that His blessing on them would be the key to their success in life.

The children range in age from infant to preteen. With them come noise, smells, and general commotion. Immediately upon seeing this group, the disciples' step between the parents and Jesus, exerting strong effort to stop the children from encountering Jesus. However, among Jews, as among other peoples, it was customary to bring children to great men to have them blessed.¹ The disciples think Jesus is just too important to be bothered with children. In fact, Mark tells readers the disciples “rebuked” the parents, a strong word that indicates the disciples verbally assaulted these parents.

Keeping the children from Jesus makes Him angry. A number of translations use the word “indignant” to describe Jesus’ reaction to the disciples. Mark is the only writer that uses the word indignant. Mark does not shy away from the human emotions of Jesus. After all, it had only been a few weeks since He taught them how He wanted children to be treated (Mark 9:36-37). In Mark 10:14, Jesus tells the disciples again that children are to have access to Him. Maybe because they did not get it the first time, Jesus feels He needs to extend His teaching to assert that children and the way they accept the reality of God’s kingdom is the way everyone should. Jesus lifts the children up in His arms and begins to lay His hands on them and say words of blessing over them. Mark uses the word to mean Jesus “fervently blesses them.”

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 713.

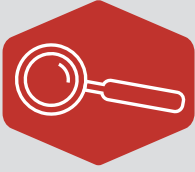


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Mark uses the masculine pronoun they to reference who is bringing the children to Jesus—not just moms but also dads. Giving full effort to help a child come to faith in Christ must be a high priority for every parent. It is imperative to train children in the faith. Some believe love = influence, but that is a wrong equation. Many parents love their kids deeply yet have no influence in their life. The right formula is love + time = influence. Consider these lessons:

- The way to bring children to Jesus is to make Him the top priority.
- The way to bring children to Jesus is to teach them God's Word.
- The way to bring children to Jesus is to spend time with them.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

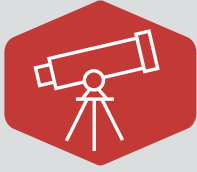
How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- Read Deuteronomy 6:6-7. What did you glean from these verses?
- Describe how you operate in your kid's world.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God’s Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 10:14. Write out the meaning of the kingdom of God in your own words.

- Mark 10:14. Why did Matthew and Mark use different language in referring to God's kingdom?

- Mark 10:15. What does it mean to receive God's kingdom like a child?

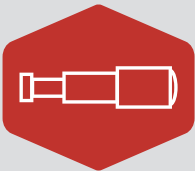
- Mark 10:16. Why does Christ bless the children?



Lesson 37: 10:17-22: Close to Jesus & Far from Heaven

Main Idea: A young man with everything going for him discovers the missing key to eternal life, only to be faced with a tough choice all would-be followers of Christ must face sooner or later.

Scripture: Mark 10:17-22



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This passage is about eternal life. John defines what eternal life is in John 17:3 and 1 John 5:20. In summary, eternal life is having relationship with Jesus. It is knowing God personally and being so united with Jesus that a person is one with Him.

This story is also in Matthew 19 and Luke 18. Matthew points out that the man in the story is young. Luke states that this man is a ruler in the synagogue, so he knows God's Word. He is exceedingly wealthy. Based on Matthew, Luke, and Mark, the man has status, influence, wealth, and prestige as a spiritual leader.

This rich young man comes to Jesus and does some things which are considered beneath men of his stature. First, he runs, and then he kneels. He is deeply convinced of the importance of his business and seriously determined

to find the answer to his need. This man comes to Jesus with urgency, humility, and respect for Him.

The man address Jesus as *Good Teacher*. Jesus answers his question and the implication to the young man is you better think about what you call me because there are implications that come with the title. The man asks Jesus, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” When the young man asks this question, Craig Keener suggests, “to inherit *eternal* life meant to share in the life of the coming world, the life of the kingdom of God.”¹ The young man already attempts to keep all the commandments. He has lived an externally blameless life, yet he is not at peace. Jesus quotes the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and fifth commandments. The young man responds in a manner that seems to say his best efforts should be good enough for God. Perhaps he believes that *trying hard* is the same as *being good*. Jesus knows exactly what is keeping this young man from a relationship with God. The issue is that God must be first in his life. Mark says that the man goes away “sorrowful,” the same word used when Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, filled with sorrow (Luke 18:23-24). To obey Jesus was too great a risk for him to take. So the security of wealth kept him out of the kingdom of God.²

1 Kenner, Craig. The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 154.

2 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 716.

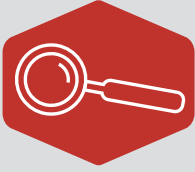


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Mark tells the story of a young man who is searching for a relationship with God. He knows something is missing and is on a journey to figure out what it is. He wants his religion to help him find happiness, satisfaction, and peace with God and others. He has been trying to achieve that externally through the things he does. It is a huge step to lay all aside and follow Jesus. Consider these lessons::

- Eternal life is about a quality of existence.
- We can look good externally yet be missing something in our hearts.
- Whenever a person elevates their righteousness standard to the same level as Jesus', it is an affront to Him.
- When we have something in our lives more important than our relationship with God, it is an idol.
- Everybody's *one thing* is different.
- When a person trusts something other than God, their identity is lost.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
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 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe your understanding of eternal life.

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very easy and 4 being difficult, how easy is it for you to keep God first in your life? How can you improve?

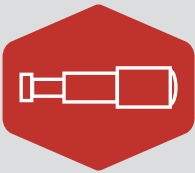
- Read Galatians 3:10-11. What did you glean from these Scriptures?



Lesson 38: Mark 10:23–31: What Happens When We Give

Main Idea: This lesson explores the spiritual power of money to prevent believers from fully trusting God with their lives and offers a valuable practice to grow that trust.

Scripture: Mark 10:23–31



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

His previous encounter with a rich young ruler launches Jesus into a discussion with His disciples about money. Most tend to see money as a sign of God's blessing, or as merely a neutral medium of exchange. But Jesus, referring to the rich young ruler who has just walked away from His invitation, states, "It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." Jesus' words amazed the disciples because from their perspective to be wealthy was sure evidence of having the blessing of God.¹

Jesus calls money "mammon." In using that term, He personifies money and sets it in opposition to God. Whatever is worshipped in opposition to God is an idol. Mammon is a *spiritual force* that we cannot serve at the same time as trying to serve God. Mammon inspires devotion and has spiritual power to win over people's hearts. When Peter hears Jesus say it is almost impossible for a

¹ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 716.

rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven, he asks Jesus, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus replies that all things are possible with God. Jesus gives Peter a promise with three results. First, if someone gives up all, they will receive back in their life a hundredfold what they lost. Second, they will suffer persecutions. Third, they will have eternal life in the age to come.

Jesus addresses those who leave everything else to follow Him into God’s kingdom. He promises much more than anything left behind for the sake of the gospel. However, money has the power to hold our hearts under its influence, preventing us from fully entrusting our lives to God’s care. Good stewardship begins by recognizing God as the owner of all things. God should be in charge of our lives and not money. Giving is an effective spiritual practice that helps grow our trust in God to be in charge of our lives. Discipleship entails suffering and service; it must be entered on in terms of love and commitment to Jesus, not because of what one hopes to get out of it either in this life or in the life to come.²

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 717.

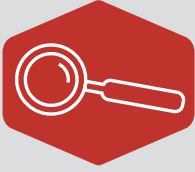


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Giving frees people from the tyranny of money. Out from under this tyranny, a believer can fearlessly care for others and make a difference in their world. When people give, God initiates a plan for rewarding good stewardship. He gives peace of mind, a heart in right standing with Him, and the promise to meet all our needs from the rich resources of His kingdom. Consider these lessons:

- When a person gives, they honor God.
- When a person gives, they store up treasures in heaven.
- When a person gives, God blesses.
- When a person gives, their priorities are realigned.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

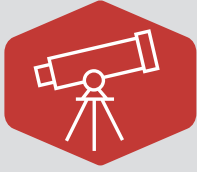


- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Read Proverbs 11:24; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6,8,11. What did you glean from these verses about giving?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very generous and 4 being not generous, rate how generous you are. Write out a plan to improve.

- Would you say you are more of a *gatherer* or a *giver*? Why?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

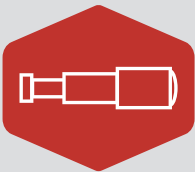
- Mark 10:30. What can you glean from this note?



Lesson 39: Mark 10:32–45: Biggest Power Play of All

Main Idea: This lesson takes a deep look at the surprising way to become great in God's kingdom.

Scripture: Mark 10:32–45



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This is the part of Mark's Gospel where Jesus is just weeks away from His crucifixion. After ministering to the crowds, He now wants to focus on His disciples. Jesus had taught them about faith, humility, divorce, children, and generosity. Now, Jesus is about to teach them about serving.

Jesus and His disciples are walking up to Jerusalem, which is about two thousand five hundred feet above sea level. Typically, one would approach Jerusalem from the Dead Sea, which is on thousand feet below sea level. So, in the fifteen to eighteen-mile trip, one would climb three thousand five hundred feet.

On the way, Jesus tells the disciples about His death for the third time in Mark (see also Mark 8:31 and 9:31). Jesus has provided a progressive revelation to His disciples about what is going to happen to Him. In this passage, He first specifies the place where His suffering will take place:

Jerusalem—exactly where they’re going. Jesus is voluntarily walking directly to the place where He expects to be killed. Second, Jesus uses eight future-tense action words to describe what will happen to Him in the days ahead. Each word is graphic and packed with meaning. The first word is *betrayed*. One of His own will betray Him using a sign of friendship, and Jesus will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes. The second word is *condemn*. The chief priests and scribes will condemn Jesus to death. The third word is *execute*. The Jewish leaders will hand Jesus over to the Romans and urge them to execute their judgement upon Him. The fourth word is *mock*. The Roman soldiers will mock Jesus. The fifth and sixth words are *spit* and *scourge*, two things the Roman soldiers will do to Jesus. The seventh word is *kill*. The Roman soldiers will finally kill Jesus. The eighth word is *rise*. Jesus will rise again.

It is likely that the disciples have a frame of reference for these eight action words. The disciples know the cruelty of the crucifixion. They had heard the cries of those the Romans executed using this tortuous method. It is also likely that the disciples, assuming they know what He will say, do not hear Jesus complete His sentence. Jesus has told them three times that after three days He will rise from the dead (see Mark 10:34; 8:31; and 9:31). Jesus is providing an illustrated sermon about serving. He is going to serve by giving His life, and that is the point of the first part of this passage in Mark.

However, the disciples do not understand what Jesus is teaching them. This is evident when James and John come to speak with Jesus. Mark in his concise telling of the story omits some of the details the other Gospel writers include about this event. The others tell readers that James and John’s mom Salome is also with them. Salome is a devotedly religious woman. In fact, she is among those who stand by the cross as Jesus dies and attends Jesus’ body after His death. Salome wants the best for her sons. She is probably acting on behalf of her sons’s request when she approaches Jesus to ask a favor: for her sons to be elevated to positions of leadership in Jesus’ cabinet when He establishes His earthly kingdom. James and John view sitting on His right and left as being positions of authority. However, they want these positions given to them without having to go through what Jesus will go through.

Jesus provides a different perspective on greatness. He uses as an example the way powerful Gentile rulers at the time raised their favorite people to positions of greatness, simply because of their relationship. Authority and position were given on the basis of who a person knew. However, in God’s kingdom, if a person wants to be great, they must be a servant. The word “servant” in Jesus’ day was used to mean menial labor. Jesus is saying, “Whoever will be great among you must be willing to do menial labor.” He is talking about an obligation to serve and lay down their life for people around



them just because the need is there. Jesus brings serving full circle when He tells His disciples that the reason for serving is to give His life as a ransom. The word *ransom* here meant a fee that a male or female slave had to come up with to purchase their freedom. No place in God's kingdom is above serving others.



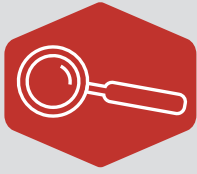
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

The disciples are trying to figure out what Jesus is trying to teach them. They have no context for understanding His remarks except for the fact that they sense mounting opposition from the religious leaders every place they go. The disciples have a different agenda than Jesus does.

When disciples walk with Jesus, they cannot make it about them and their agenda. They have to learn to see God's bigger picture. A disciple's own needs and desires cannot be the sum of what they are about nor the heart of their focus. Consider these lessons:

- Time with Jesus allows Him to progressively reveal things to us.
- Time with Jesus allows Him to clarify our goals.
- Time with Jesus allows Him to help us endure the process of pain.
- Time with Jesus allows us to trust the future to God's plan.
- Time with Jesus allows us Him to give us a servant's heart.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

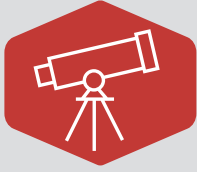
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe a time in your life when God’s agenda and your agenda did not match.

- When you hear the word “servant,” what comes to mind? How can you develop the mindset of a servant like Jesus referenced?

- Describe a time when you did menial labor for someone who just needed help and who was not a family member.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

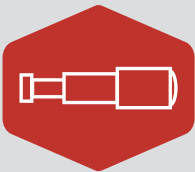
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 40: Mark 10:46–52: How to Get Out of a Deep Rut

Main Idea: In this lesson, a blind man finds healing and new life when he calls to Jesus.

Scripture: Mark 10:46–52



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Jesus and His disciples walk down the east side of the Jordan River to get to Judea from Galilee. This will be Jesus' last journey through Jericho. Jericho is eighty hundred fifty feet below sea level, whereas Jerusalem is two thousand five hundred feet above sea level. Everywhere water touches the soil in Jericho there is green vegetation. There are palm trees and balsam trees. Jericho is a resort city, the place of retreat for many of the twenty thousand priests who take turns ministering at the temple in Jerusalem. The priests are divided into twenty-six serving groups, which rotate in the temple throughout the year, and most likely many spend their downtime in Jericho. But now it is Passover time. All twenty thousand priests have to make the approximately fifteen to sixteen-mile trip from Jericho to Jerusalem—about a six-hour journey.

Jericho's streets are full, and right at the city's edge sits a blind man. His job is to call upon the sympathy of the travelers, asking them for alms. Blind people can be identified by their cloak. The way it is made tells people one is

a beggar. Word passes through the streets that Jesus, the miracle worker, is among the crowd of people leaving Jericho for Jerusalem. Of all the healing miracles reported by Mark, this is the only one where Mark gives the name of the person being healed. As he hears of Jesus' presence, this blind man, Bartimaeus, begins to calculate his plan. The healing of Bartimaeus is not Jesus' last healing miracle before His death; He will also heal in the temple courts. But this is the last personal interchange with the miraculous in Mark's Gospel.

As the many priests are on their way out of Jericho to help in the Passover celebration, Bartimaeus is there crying out for healing. People who could not work because of physical problems could support themselves by begging. Craig Keener sheds some insight on helping people who beg when he says, "Judaism considered it righteous to help them [beggars]." ¹ The beggar is told to "take heart." The word translated "Cheer up!" (take heart) is *tharsei*. It occurs only seven times in the NT (Matthew 9:2, 22; 14:27; Mark 6:50; 10:49; John 16:33; Acts 23:11), and six of the seven are from the lips of Jesus. The exception is here. ² Immediately, Bartimaeus throws off his cloak, jumps to his feet, and moves toward Jesus. Finally standing right in front of Jesus, Bartimaeus hears Him ask, "What do you want me to do?" Bartimaeus tells Jesus he wants to see. Jesus speaks healing words to him, and Bartimaeus is healed immediately.

1 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 155.

2 Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 722.

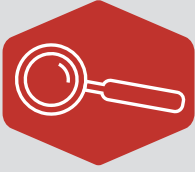


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Mark's Gospel starts with three healing miracles recorded in chapter one. Then, the healing of Bartimaeus is the last healing miracle recorded by Mark before Jesus begins His passion week. It seems significant that the miracle is the opening of blind eyes: Jesus desires to remove whatever blocks our spiritual understanding. In essence, Bartimaeus receives more than he asks. He asks for physical sight but receives the complete restoration of body, soul, and spirit. He tastes the glory of God and experiences victory in his life. From this one moving encounter, Bartimaeus takes responsibility for getting out of his rut and becomes a disciple of Jesus. Consider these lessons:

- To get out of a rut, you must assume responsibility for your situation.
- To get out of a rut, you cannot wait for the ideal circumstance.
- To get out of a rut, you cannot worry about what others will think or say.
- To get out of a rut, you cannot be afraid to step out boldly and believe God.
- To get out of a rut, once you are out of it, stay out.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

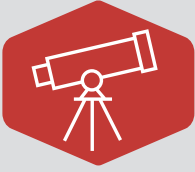
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- What steps do you take in order to make sure you do not get in a spiritual rut?

- How do you get out of a spiritual rut if you find yourself in one?

- Describe a time when Jesus answered your prayer.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

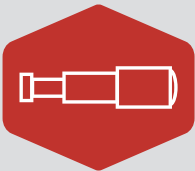
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 41: Mark 11:1–11: An Appropriate Response to the King

Main Idea: As Jesus begins His final week of ministry, believers then and now are challenged to consider His true purpose on earth and our response to Him.

Scripture: Mark 11:1–11



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This passage marks the beginning of Jesus' final week of His earthly ministry. It is now six days before His crucifixion. He arrives at a little village approximately two miles east of Jerusalem called Bethany. In John 11, Jesus resurrects a friend from this town names Lazarus. Six months later, Jesus is back in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.

At the beginning of the day, the disciples are instructed to go into Bethphage where they will find the colt of a donkey tied at a certain house. Craig Keener gives insight to borrowing a colt. He says, "In second-century Egypt, donkeys ranges in price from fifty to three hundred fifty drachmas—roughly between two- and ten-months' complete wages for a worker."¹ It seems significant to notice that for Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to occur, perhaps because of economics, Jesus borrowed someone's animal.

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 156.

Mark references two Old Testament passages. The first is from Zechariah. Mark explains that the Messiah would come sitting on a donkey rather than a horse, possibly because a donkey was a sign of peace whereas a horse was a sign of war to be ridden by a conqueror. Craig Keener again sheds light as to why Jesus may have ridden a donkey instead of a horse. He says, “The Romans would have arrested someone they suspected as a claim to be a ruler, but no one would expect a genuine messianic claim to enter Jerusalem peacefully and unarmed, since certain death would await such a person.”²

The second passage is from Psalm 118:25–26 and represents a prayer from God’s people for the Messiah to come and save them. About one hundred fifty years earlier when the Maccabees throw out the Syrians in the Maccabean revolt and temple worship was restored, the Maccabees are welcomed back to the shout from Psalm 118. From this time forward, Psalm 118 becomes a theme song for patriotism. When the people throw their cloaks out onto the road, they are saying that Jesus is the Messiah—the One who, they believe, will remove corrupt Jewish leaders and lead a revolt against Rome. The loud praise of Jesus’ followers draw a crowd eager to know who He is. “The cry of Hosanna is related to the coming kingdom and does not directly designate Jesus as Davidic King.”³ The crowd proclaims the kingdom and not the king.

2 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 156.

3 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 725.

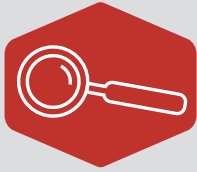


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God’s Word is saying to you today.

Jesus is coming to Jerusalem to present himself as King to the people of Israel. This is the first time in Mark that we are told Jesus needs anything. It is ironic that the God who “owns the cattle on a thousand hills” (Scripture reference) needs to borrow transportation to get to Jerusalem. When the people see Jesus, they give the highest and purest form of worship—submission. Consider these truths about the King:

- The King knows what He is doing..
- The King wants to use your life.
- The King’s orders should be obeyed even if you do not understand.
- The King is worthy of worship, which is not defined by us but by Him.
- The King is not fooled by phony worship.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe your understanding of worship.

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not so well, rate how well you worship God. How can you improve your worship?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 11:1. What is the Passion week?

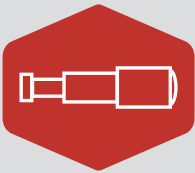
- Mark 11:9. What was the difference in thought between the crowd and Jesus regarding His purpose?



Lesson 42: Mark 11:12–19: An Autopsy of Lifeless Religion

Main Idea: This lesson explores Jesus’ response to a fruitless tree and His actions in the Temple court, challenging us to look honestly at our own religion.

Scripture: Mark 11:12–19



The Author’s Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God’s Word.

In this lesson, Mark continues the Passion week of Jesus. Jesus spends the nights at Bethany. All but one of the days between Palm Sunday and Good Friday, He walks the two miles from Bethany to Jerusalem and ministers in and around the Temple.

On this particular day, Jesus leaves Bethany early, accompanied by His disciples. Walking along the road, He spots a fig tree full of leaves, indicating that there is fruit on it. Jesus leaves the road to go pick some for breakfast. When Jesus comes close to the tree, it is obvious that there is no fruit. Craig Keener provides insight to this scene. He states, “edible figs were still about six weeks away, but the bland fruit had recently appeared on the tree in late March; they would become ripe by late May. These were the early figs that preceded the main crop of late figs. If only leaves appeared, without the early figs, that tree would bear no figs that year—whether early or late.”¹ He

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 157.

immediately curses the tree pronouncing that no fruit will grow on it again. The tree withers away beginning that moment. This is the only destructive miracle that takes place in Jesus' entire ministry. The next day the disciples notice the tree has died.

Jesus then goes to the Temple where He proceeds to cleanse it by driving the animal sellers and money changers out of it. The cleansing of the temple, in fulfillment of Malachi 3:1-3, was Jesus' second messianic act during the Passion Week, the first having been the Triumphal Entry.² The Temple grounds covered about thirty-five acres with only a small part of that area being occupied by the building that contained the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Much of the thirty-five acres was called the court of the Gentiles, a place where everyone, Jew and Gentiles alike, was supposed to be welcome. It is in this open court that all the buying and selling is transpiring. What Jesus sees happening is the opposite of what is supposed to be occurring in this hallowed place. They are preparing for the Passover, which is just six days away. Because many have traveled so far, they have not brought animals with them for sacrifice, hence the animal sales inside the Temple. In addition, since the Jews travel in from all parts of the world, they carry money with many different images on it, money that cannot be used in the Temple. Thus, money changers also have shops set up in the court of the Gentiles, extortionists brought in by the High Priest. They drive up the price of the sacrificial animals and the exchange rate to pay a Temple tax. Mark wants his readers to understand that Jesus is not happy with religious leaders who exploit the vulnerable for personal profit. By overturning the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves, Jesus was directly challenging the authority of the high priest, because they were there by his authorization.³

What bothers Jesus is the perversion of the purpose of the Temple grounds from a place to meet God to a place to conduct religious business. Furthermore, this business has become illicit. The sellers remind Jesus of a den of thieves, and He quotes from Isaiah 56:7. All of Isaiah 56 is about God's plan to have a place where foreigners can come and hear the message of God's grace. That's why the Temple was designed with a court for the Gentiles. However, in Jesus' day, Gentiles could not enter the Temple. The sick, the lame, and the lepers were banned from entering. The Temple was not a sanctuary for healing. It had become a place for selling, a place for business.

The chief priests in charge of the Temple have been silent during the buying

² Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 727.

³ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 727.



and selling, most likely approving of such enterprises. But Jesus' actions challenge their leadership. Suddenly, the court of the Gentiles is filled with people who have previously been barred from entry. Jesus' charge against the religious leaders is that they have taken a sacred space and made it a criminal lane.

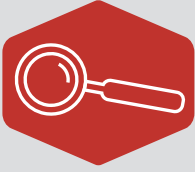


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Jesus used parables to teach important lessons to His disciples. Parables are “earthly stories with heavenly meanings.” Most parables were given in words, but some were made up of dramatic actions, stories told through actions taken. This story in Mark is a living parable. The fig tree is a metaphor for what Jesus will find in the temple. He is assessing religion gone bad during His day. The message for the believer is that Jesus has come to restore praise, to adjust our praise to His specifications, and to make our praise perfect in His sight. Consider these lessons:

- Lifeless religion only looks healthy from a distance.
- Lifeless religion does not produce fruit.
- Lifeless religion becomes a haven for what God hates.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

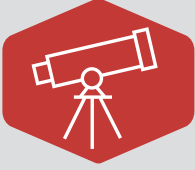
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe what you think of when you hear the word “religion.”

- Why is it important to make sure there is spiritual depth and growth in your life?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

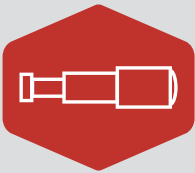
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 43: Mark 11:20–26: Mountain Moving Faith

Main Idea: Jesus astounds the disciples by revealing that they, too, can access the real, living power of God’s kingdom through simple faith—a fact that remains true today.

Scripture: Mark 11:20–26



The Author’s Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God’s Word.

This is the final week of Jesus’ life. On Sunday, Jesus has dinner with some friends in Bethany. He rides a donkey across the top of the Mount of Olives, down across the Kidron Valley, back up the slope on the other side, and into Jerusalem.

In Mark’s account, Jesus returns to Bethany to sleep at the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. On Tuesday of Passion Week, Jesus goes into the Temple courts and sees the money changers ripping off the people with exorbitant exchange rates. In addition, they are selling sacrificial animals at inflated prices. As an object lesson, Jesus sees what appears to be a healthy fig tree with a lot of leaves. But it does not actually have any figs on it, so Jesus curses it. He goes into the Temple, drives out the money changers and sellers, then goes back to Bethany.

Mark 11:20–26 takes place on Wednesday morning. Most trees take weeks or months to die, but this tree has died overnight. Jesus does not in any way interpret the event. Yet the meaning is obvious: Jesus’ predicted judgment on the temple will come to pass as surely as his prediction of the withering of the fig tree.¹ Moving a mountain is a phrase Jews would use to describe a situation that would be impossible to overcome. Craig Keener provides insight into the meaning of the phrase *moving mountains*. He says, “Some Jewish texts speak of removing mountains as an infinitely long or virtually impossible task, accomplished only by the most pious.”² The mountain Jesus refers to in His conversation with the disciples is the nearby Temple Mount, which is the size of about fifteen football fields. Herod the Great had taken the upper part of Mount Moriah and moved it down the ridge to create the Temple Mount. Jesus teaches His disciples about the unlimited power of prayer.

1 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 729.

2 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 158.

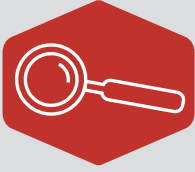


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

The disciples question Jesus about the fig tree dying so quickly. Jesus understands their question to be about the kind of power it takes to speak a word and have that word cause such a powerful effect in such a short time. The disciples would have known it had taken decades to move all the dirt that made up the Temple Mount. Humanly speaking, a person can move a mountain given enough time, resources, and ingenuity. But Jesus is teaching the disciples that it is possible to simply speak—in faith—to obstacles that are faced. Faith is very important to our spiritual development. Consider these lessons:

- Mountain moving faith is in God.
- Mountain moving faith is spoken.
- Mountain moving faith prays.
- Mountain moving faith enables forgiveness.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

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 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

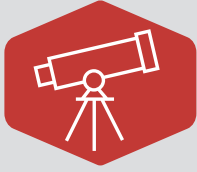
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- What does walking by faith mean to you?

- Describe a time when walking by faith helped you to handle a tough situation.

- What does forgiveness mean to you?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 11:22. What are two things you can glean about faith?

- Mark 11:24. How does one receive faith?

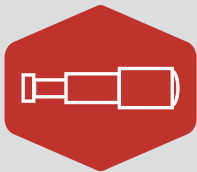
- Mark 11:25. How is forgiving others related to praying to God?



Lesson 44: Mark 11:27–12:12: Is Jesus in Charge of Your Life?

Main Idea: This lesson explores Jesus' response to religious leaders with a parable that challenged their authority and revealed His.

Scripture: Mark 11:27–12:12



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Less than one hundred hours before the crucifixion, Jesus leaves Bethany and journeys to Jerusalem with His disciples. Upon arriving in the Temple, Jesus begins to teach His disciples. The teaching time is interrupted by a group of Jewish leaders troubled by the things Jesus has done in the last few days. He had healed numerous sick and suffering people, made a triumphal entry into the city, and, probably most troubling to these leaders, taken authority over the Temple grounds, driving the animal sellers and money changes out. The authority Jesus exhibits unsettles the Jewish leaders.

At the time of Jesus there are approximately twenty thousand priests, assigned to rotational divisions so that every two months they would serve at the Temple. At the morning and evening sacrifice, a priest was chosen by lottery to go into the Holy Place. Once you went into the Holy Place one time, you never got to go in again. The priest chosen would take the coals from the place of sacrifice and go into the Holy Place to the altar of incense. He

would put the coals on the altar and then pour incense on top of the hot coals. Fragrance would rise, symbolizing the prayers of the people. Then the priest would leave the Holy Place immediately.

The priests conspire to confront Jesus and trap Him into saying or doing something for which they can bring charges against Him. Their desire is to somehow discredit Him in the eyes of the people and to stop Him in His tracks. Their religious convictions coupled with their desire to hold political sway over the people compel them to try once more to make Him stumble in full view of the public. They are not successful. Jesus hears their question and immediately responds. He knows the opinion of the crowd toward John the Baptist, His own cousin. John had all the identifiers of a true prophet of God. Thousands of people had gone to the Jordan river to renew their faith and be baptized by John. Many of the crowd knew that John, himself, had pointed to Jesus and called Him, “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Jesus tells the Jewish leaders that if they will answer His question, He will tell them the source of His authority. If they recognized the divine authority of John’s mission, they would be forced to recognize Jesus’ also and his cleansing of the temple as the legitimate exercise of his authority.¹ In an attempt to maintain their dignity and position, the priests will not answer Jesus’ question, saying they do not know. But all indicators point to the fact that they did know. The priests decide it will be better to lie than to admit in any way that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus then tells a parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Parables were not used to hide the meaning of what Jesus had to say. Instead, parables could reveal truth in such a way that the hearers would have to engage with the story deeply to draw the meaning from it. This parable is so clear that everyone knows exactly what it means. It infuriates them to the point that they begin looking for a way to have Him arrested.

The parable is about a landowner who invests in a piece of property, a vineyard. The landowner builds a wall around the vineyard. He makes provisions for processing the grapes, and he builds a watchtower for the protection of his property. Once the landowner is ready to rent his property, he finds some sharecroppers, makes a deal with them, and leaves on a long journey.

The landowner knows it will be five years before he will receive his share of the produce from the sharecroppers. The sharecroppers know what they are getting into when they make the agreement with the landowner. For their

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 730.

labor, they will receive one-third of all the proceeds from the sale of the produce. But the sharecroppers let resentment and animosity grow in them toward the landowner. When the landowner's steward comes, they beat him and send him away with nothing. Another servant is sent only to be met with the same fate as the steward. The third servant sent is killed, and now the landowner is determined to get his share of the profits. The landowner decides to send his son believing the sharecroppers will respect him. The sharecroppers likely think that the landowner has died, and the son has come to claim the produce of the land. The sharecroppers kill the son thinking the land will now be theirs. They must be surprised when they look up one morning and see the landowner coming over the hill to execute judgment against them. The sharecroppers are killed because of their evil deeds, and the landowner hires a new set of sharecroppers to tend his land.

Jesus then explains the parable, quoting from Psalm 118:22–23. The chief priests and elders know exactly what Jesus means. He is saying the landowner is God the Father, and the vineyard is Israel, God's chosen people. The sharecroppers are leaders of the people of Israel. The servants sent by the landowner represent the prophets of the Old Testament. And the landowner's son is Jesus, rejected by Israel as its Messiah.

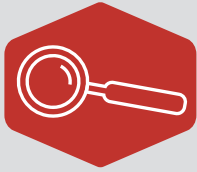


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Why would these Jewish leaders refuse to admit that Jesus was God's representative on earth and that the power He exercised was the power of God? The issue of this passage is Jesus' authority. The word "authority" is used four times, a word we do not care for very much in our society. Authority denotes position, power, influence, control, or the right to render judgment. Some struggle with people having authority. Jesus' authority surpasses all others. It is good to be reminded that Jesus has all authority. Consider these lessons:

- A correct response to God's mercy is vital.
- God has made a tremendous investment in you.
- God is the owner of all.
- God wants to be the main building block of your life.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

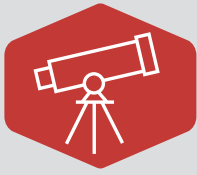
- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe your relationship with Jesus.

- What does the word “authority” mean to you?

- Why do you think it is hard to submit to authority?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being completely released and 4 being unreleased, rate to what degree you have released your life to Jesus. How can you release more of your life to Him?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 12:1. Whom do the tenants represent?

- Mark 12:1. What two things can you glean?

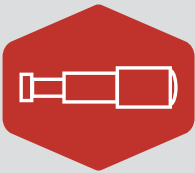
- Mark 12:10. How was Jesus like a rejected stone but also the most important stone of God’s building?



Lesson 45: Mark 12:13–17: Paying What You Owe

Main Idea: Jesus shows how being a disciple in God’s kingdom does not exempt one from respecting earthly kings and rulers, but rather the opposite.

Scripture: Mark 12:13–17



The Author’s Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God’s Word.

Mark deals with an unlikely coalition in this text: The Pharisees, strict keepers of the Jewish law, made a pact with the Herodians, a political group, in support of a return of the Herods to be the leaders of their part of the Roman Empire. Not much is known about the Herodians except what their name suggests. They were people affiliated with Herod’s court. The Pharisees want to trap Jesus in some chargeable offense so that they can take Him into custody and possibly kill him. The Herodians were as obnoxious to the Pharisees on political grounds as the Sadducees were on theological grounds. Yet the two groups united in their opposition to Jesus.¹

Rome levied several different taxes on the lands they conquered, a property tax, income tax, customs (import and export) tax, and a census tax. The Jewish people despised the census tax. In fact, it was so despised that it

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 733.

was the root cause of two different revolts. The coin that paid the tax was a common coin, the equivalent to one day's wage. The Jews hated that coin because every time they used it, they were reminded of Rome's oppression. A second reason the Jews hated the coin was because one of the ten commandments forbade having any idols. The image on the coin was of Tiberius Augustus, the son of Caesar Augustus. The writing on the coin said, "Tiberius Augustus son of the divine Augustus." This was saying Augustus was God and Tiberius was the Son of God. The other side of the coin showed Lydia, his mother, who was known as the goddess of peace. Around her picture were the words, "Pontiffs Maximus," which is where the title of the Pope comes from. Because of these images and words, the Jews considered the coin an idol.

When they approach Him, Jesus understands that these two groups are testing Him. He asks them to bring him a coin and then asks them whose picture is on the coin. In verse 14, Mark uses the word "pay," which means gift—something given freely. However, in verse 17 Mark uses the word "render" in Jesus' response, which refers to a debt or obligation. Jesus instructs them to give Caesar's money back to Caesar, as a debt owed. Likewise, they are to fulfill their obligation to God, to whom they owe the greater debt by far.

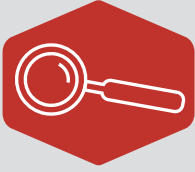


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

In the last days of Jesus' life, He is teaching that the kingdom of God and the political government coexist in different domains. The kingdom of God is higher because God rules all things. Political leaders exist under the rule of God and are sanctioned by God to rule for a season. Members of the kingdom of God recognize that the Scripture teaches believers to honor the rulers in the political domain. Believers are to pay due diligence to the rule of earthly leaders while at the same time living in obedience to the transcendent rules of the kingdom of God. What Jesus is teaching is that some things *belong* to an earthly ruler, and some things belong to God alone. Consider these lessons:

- Believers should be subject to rulers and authorities.
- Believers should live in obedience to laws.
- Believers should work to make the place they live a better place.
- Believers should recall that their worship of God comes from the deepest inner level.
- Believers should walk in obedience to God at a higher level.
- Believers should pursue God's plan for their lives because He owns and rules us.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

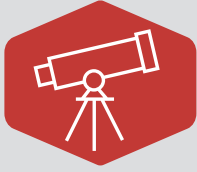
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- What things do you think belong to an earthly ruler?

- What things do you think belong to God?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very high and 4 being very low, rate how highly you live for God. How can you improve?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

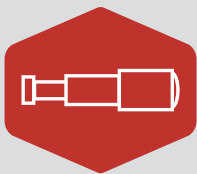
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 46: Mark 12:18–27: God of Angel Armies and the Living

Main Idea: This lesson considers the resurrection and life after death, in light of Jesus’ response to the Sadducees.

Scripture: Mark 12:18–27



The Author’s Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God’s Word.

In the time of Jesus, the Sadducees were small numerically but exerted great influence politically and religiously.¹ Because of their alliance with the Romans, the Sadducees controlled the city. They believed in the first five books of the Old Testament only. They did not believe in the resurrection of the body, in angels, or in eternal life. They believed that at death both the body and soul died. In the NT the Sadducees are mentioned only fourteen times whereas the Pharisees are mentioned about one hundred times. Mark mentions them only in this verse and identifies them with the statement “who say there is no resurrection.”² This group of powerful religious leaders confront Jesus just a few days before the crucifixion in an attempt to trap Him into saying something that will give them a reason to crucify Him.

The Sadducees ask a question based on the Law of Moses, designed to show

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 735.

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 735.

how ridiculous the idea of resurrection is. Moses had declared that if a man died and left his wife with no children, his brother should marry her and have children in his dead brother's name. The Sadducees propose a scenario: six of seven brothers die, all having known the same wife. If the resurrection is real, whose wife she will be in heaven? The case is so ludicrous it may have been a well-known Sadducean joke used for poking fun at the Pharisees' doctrine of the Resurrection.³

Jesus' response is masterful. The Sadducees do not know enough Scripture to make a case. It is the power of God that confirms the Word of God. The resurrection would usher a person into a new place that would operate according to different rules than those of this life on earth. The Sadducees' question reveals their mistaken belief that life after death will concern itself with the same things as life before death. Jesus reveals that what the angels concern themselves with in heaven is a picture of the kinds of things believers can also expect to be concerned.

³ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 735.

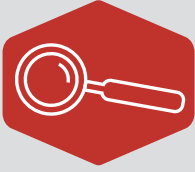


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

What Jesus teaches in Mark is that any time someone separates themselves from the entirety of Scripture and the power of God, they are going to develop an insufficient theology. All beliefs concerning the resurrection and life in heaven should be biblically based. There is no room for myth, sentimentalism, or folklore in a believer's understanding of heaven. It is also a trap to be so enamored with our earthly life that we assume heaven will just be a better and more enduring extension of it. Consider these lessons:

- When you do not believe the whole Bible, it causes a diminished understanding of the parts you do believe.
- Confidence in God's character brings hope for spiritual resurrection now, and physical resurrection in the future.
- The spiritual, invisible world is real.
- Heaven is the fulfillment of the covenant of God with humanity.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

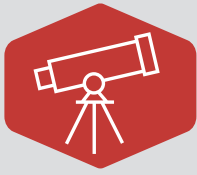
 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- Describe your relationship with Jesus.
- Why do you think it is important to study the whole Bible?
- Describe your understanding of heaven.
- Why do you think the world does a better job talking about the dark side (demonic) than the church does talking about the light side (angels, spiritual world)?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

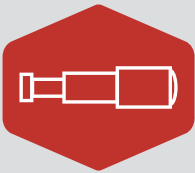
- Mark 12:25. What can you learn about the relationship between a husband and wife in heaven?



Lesson 47: Mark 12:28–34: The Most Important of All

Main Idea: By considering the two core commands Jesus points out to a scribe, believers can better understand how to live a life centered around God.

Scripture: Mark 12:28–34



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

It has been said that Moses received six hundred thirteen different precepts from God: three hundred sixty-five negative ones and two hundred forty-eight positive ones, and Moses reduced the list to ten commandments. Attempts were made to differentiate between the “heavy,” or “great,” and the “light,” or “little,” commandments. The rabbis also made attempts to formulate great principles from which the rest of the law could be deduced.¹

In Psalm 15, David gives a concise list of the law of Moses, summing it up in the following 11 commands: walk with integrity, do works of righteousness, speak the truth in your heart, do not slander, do not do evil to a friend, do not take up a reproach against your neighbor, despise a vile person, honor those who fear the Lord, keep an oath even when it hurts, lend your money without usury, and do not accept a bribe against the innocent.

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 736–737.

Isaiah reduces the essential commands to six in Isaiah 33:15. They are to walk uprightly, speak what is right, reject gain from extortion (unjust gain), keep your hand from accepting bribes, stop your ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shut your eyes from looking on evil.

Micah reduces the essential list of commandments to just three in Micah 6:8. They are do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God. And Habakkuk reduces the commandments to a single verse. Habakkuk 2:4 states, “The just shall live by faith.”

All of the above is shows that the scribes who approach Jesus in Mark 12:28–34 are in good company. By the time of Jesus, the Talmud contained thousands of lines explaining how to keep each point of the law. When the scribe asks Jesus the question in verse 28, it is impossible to know his heart. However, Jesus does not treat the scribe as being hostile to Him. Jesus gives His summary in two parts. First, pulling from Deuteronomy, Jesus says, “To love God.” Second, pulling from Leviticus 19:18, He says, “Love others.” Jesus brought Leviticus 19:18 together with Deuteronomy 6:5 to show that love of neighbor is a natural and logical outgrowth of love of God.²

Love is the key verb used in both the first and second part of these great commandments. Mark uses a word for love that means to be self-sacrificing and self-giving. He is clear with the words from Jesus that love must include all of one’s passion, heart, and inner drive. It must include all of one’s soul—everything at the center of one’s being. It must include all of one’s mind—all intellect a person possesses. And it must include all of one’s strength. That is, all that a person can do and accomplish should be motivated by love for God. Then out of this kind of love for God grows a deep devotion to one another.

The scribe does not expect the answer Jesus gives. The scribe has no point of contention with Jewish law or custom. His summation is that Jesus is on target with His understanding and summation of the commandments of Holy Scripture. The repetition in verse 33 shows the scribe’s understanding and acceptance of what Jesus said. The scribe proclaims that to do exactly what Jesus said would be better than burnt offerings and sacrifices. Jesus perceives that the scribe is stirred at the core of his being.

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 737.

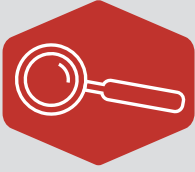


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

In His answer to the scribe's question, Jesus does not negate any part of the Law of Moses. He does not teach to keep only these two commandments and ignore the rest. However, He does identify these two statements as the essential parts of the Great Commandment as the foundation upon which obedience to all He has commanded should rest. Consider these lessons:

- It is possible to be devoted to religious rules but not be devoted to God.
- Christian life apart from relationships is shallow.
- A relationship with God requires everything we have.
- Loving God has less to do with how a person feels and more about how a person lives for Him.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

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- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

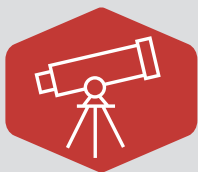
- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Read Mark 12:30 and circle the word “your.” This word is not plural but singular. What can you glean from this?

- Read Mark 12:30 again and circle the word “all.” What can you glean from this?

- How you can have a deep devotion to God?

- Describe how you love others.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God’s Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?
- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 12:30. What does loving God with all your heart mean?

- Mark 12:30. What does loving God with all your soul mean?

- Mark 12:30. What does loving God with all your mind mean?

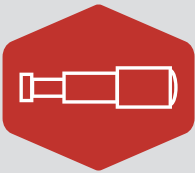
- Mark 12:30. What does loving God with all your strength mean?



Lesson 48: Mark 12:35–37: Whose Son Is Jesus?

Main Idea: This lesson looks at who Jesus claimed to be shortly before He was arrested, challenging the people’s preconceived ideas about the Messiah.

Scripture: Mark 12:35–37



The Author’s Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God’s Word.

Jesus is in the final week of His life, and He is carrying on a discussion in the Temple with all who will listen. As was Jesus’ pattern, He opens with a question, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?” Although Jesus is referring to himself, He does not use a personal name. He refers to himself with a title, “the Christ.”

This title would have been understood to be a reference to the Messiah, the one the Jews believed would bring deliverance and political freedom. The people Jesus addresses in the Temple do not come to the same conclusion Peter did earlier in Mark when he declared, “You are the Christ” (Mark 8:29). Their mental picture of the Messiah is most likely a warrior-king like David who would march into Jerusalem, drive out the heathen Roman ruler, and establish His throne in Jerusalem. Earlier in the week, Jesus had ridden into the city with people shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” and Jesus knew their concept

of the Messiah was not complete because they longed merely for political and religious freedom from their oppressors.

Jesus continues to question them, quoting from Psalm 110, the most quoted Old Testament text in the New Testament. It is not clear if the people understood what He was saying, and the teaching ends without any further reference to Jesus' divinity or Messiahship. The main point of Jesus' reply presupposes the psalm's messianic usage.¹

It is clear that Jesus was speaking about himself. He was biologically in the lineage of David, just as both Matthew and Luke show Him to be. The Jewish people kept meticulous records in the Temple area. They could easily check Jesus' lineage. However, though He came from David's line, He was greater than David. He was David's Lord. Jesus' reasoning is that if the Messiah was David's God, then the Messiah must be God. Therefore, the Messiah is not just the Son of David, but also the Son of God. Jesus is saying that He would sit at God's right hand, the place of authority, equality, power, honor, and prominence. It was this statement that got Jesus killed.

¹ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 738.

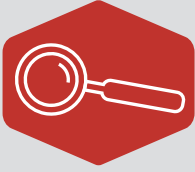


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Jesus is the answer to the question He posed. Jesus was human, born of a virgin, with the royal blood of the God of Heaven flowing through His veins. He had a human nature and, at the same time, a godly nature. He was David's son and, at the same time, David's Lord. The Pharisees were upset by His words. The people, earlier in the week, had called Him "Messiah," and now He was claiming to be Messiah. A few days later, the truth of Jesus' words would dawn on the disciples, and they would spend the rest of their days proclaiming that they had seen the Messiah. Consider these thoughts:

- Jesus was fully human.
- Jesus was fully God.
- Jesus always invites people to Him, even at the end.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- How does God feel about people who do not want anything to do with Him?

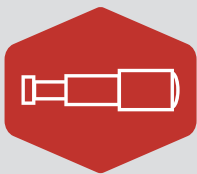
- How would you proclaim Jesus as God in the flesh?



Lesson 49: Mark 12:38-44: The Widow's Mite

Main Idea: A poor widow puts wealthy religious leaders to shame in her generous devotion to God, even when it hurts.

Scripture: Mark 12:38-44



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Mark depicts the scribes of Jesus' day in a negative way. They were the people who handled the Word of God, the keepers of the law who were also responsible for teaching the law to the people. This story, the most famous donation made in all of Scripture, appears in Mark and Luke. As Jesus is teaching during His final week, He is confronted by religious leaders four different times in attempts to discredit Him or get Him in trouble with Rome. So, Jesus tells the people to watch out for the scribes.

Jesus has several criticisms of them. First, He criticizes the way they dress and carry themselves. Second, He criticizes their lack of humility. And third, He criticizes their ruthless treatment of widows. These scribes used their offices to gain control of the property owned by widows, screening their evil deeds behind false piety, praying long prayers in the synagogues and pretending to be intimate with the Father.

After spending the day teaching, Jesus sits down and watches the people coming to the Temple to give. In the court of women, there were thirteen chests shaped like trumpets, and each had a sign designating its offering contents. There was only one mandatory offering—the temple tax. Every Jewish male had to pay this tax each year. The offerings Jesus is witnessing are freewill offerings, which means the widow Jesus sees does not have to give or she could have kept one of her two coins and given one. Such a small amount, (1/64 of a denarius) would not make much difference either way, in human terms. Craig Keener points out, “the officials would probably waste this widow’s money; but this powerless woman, ignorant of that likelihood, acts in good faith in her devotion to God and is the greatest giver in God’s sight.”¹

Jesus points out that the scribes are giving out of their abundance. That is, they do not give enough to be in any way challenged, or even inconvenienced, by their giving. A second problem Jesus has with their giving, implied in the text, is they do not give as an act of worship. In the context of these verses, their giving is to put on a show, to call attention to themselves. It is not to serve the poor. Jesus’ commendation regarding the woman is that she gives all she has as an act of worship.

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 161.



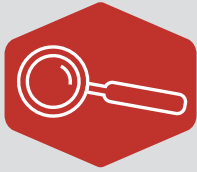
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Much of our lives is about making money, earning money, and spending money. In fact, sixteen of the thirty-eight parables Jesus told have to do with money. One out of ten verses in Scripture have to do with the stewardship of finances. Two thousand verses have to do with money, while just five hundred have to do with prayer or faith.

Most Americans who read this story today are more like the rich people than the poor widow. If a person makes just thirty-three thousand annually, they are in the top one percent of income brackets in the entire world. God cares about our money and what we do with it. Consider these thoughts:

- God watches and cares about what we give.
- God is honored when we have a heart for the things of God.
- God is honored when we refuse to make excuses for ourselves.
- God is honored when we participate in giving.
- God is honored when we give more than commanded.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
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 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

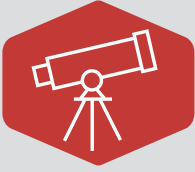
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not well, rate yourself on how well you honor God with your giving. How can you improve?

- Why do you think God watches and cares about what we give?

- How does giving help develop your walk of faith?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 12:38. What are two things you can glean about religious leaders?

- Mark 12:40. What are two things you can glean about Jewish leaders?

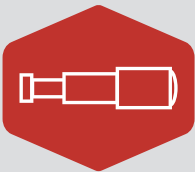
- Mark 12:42. How does God measure a person's giving and generosity?



Lesson 50: Mark 13:1–13: Doing Life in the Last Days

Main Idea: Jesus prepares the disciples for future difficulties, assuring them He has it all under control and that they do not have to worry.

Scripture: Mark 13:1–13



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

It is Passion Week. Jesus and the disciples have spent most of the day in the Temple grounds. They now head back to Bethany, crossing the Kidron Valley, and walk up the Mount of Olives. As they are leaving the Temple, one disciple remarks on its awe-inspiring stones and grandness. Remember, these men are mostly Galileans who have not spent much time in Jerusalem until now.

The Temple wall surrounded a thirty-five-acre plot of ground on top of a mountain. The main building on the grounds was the Temple proper with a huge altar just outside the door where burnt offerings were made. All of the walls and structures were built with huge pieces of stone, some as long as 40 feet and weighing many tons. The disciples must have reasoned that nothing could ever topple this great Temple. But Jesus tells them all the stones will be toppled. So completely were they destroyed that no trace of them remains today. Even their exact location on the temple mount is disputed.¹

¹ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 743.

Peter, James, John, and Andrew wait for a time to have Jesus' full attention. When they have it, they ask Him when all this will happen. For these men, the Temple represents stability and permanence. It stands for the Jewish nation they hope will rise again. To talk of its demise is disturbing. They ask for a sign that will give them forewarning of these events. They want to know two things. First, when such an upheaval will be, and second, what signs will alert them to it. Jesus first responds by warning them that false Christs will arise, people who appear to have the qualities of Christ but are not Him. But Jesus refused to give them eschatological signs. Throughout the discourse he is more concerned to prepare them by exhortation and warning for the trials that lay ahead than to give them dates and signs.²

Then Jesus tells of coming wars, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes, assuring them that they should not become frightened. It is as if the Lord is saying instructing them to endure all the future events because they must happen before the great event, His second coming, can happen.

These disciples faced a horrifying experience. In 70AD Jerusalem was destroyed. During the siege, 1.1 million Jewish people were killed, and the entire city was so ravaged it looked like a wasteland. The disciples lived to about the age of sixty, which was long enough to see Jerusalem leveled at the command of the Roman Emperor Titus. The Temple was destroyed, and gardens planted where great buildings once stood.

In Mark 13, Jesus prepares His disciples for what they will face. He tells them to be alert for persecution from religious leaders. And His prophecy is fulfilled in Acts 4: Persecution followed Pentecost. By Acts 12, James, Peter's brother, has been martyred. By the end of the period covered by the Book of Acts, Peter has been crucified and Paul has been beheaded. Jesus even tells His disciples that family members will betray some believers.

Through everything, the disciples are to remain on guard and not succumb to worry. Jesus warns them that they will be hauled before governors, kings, and courts, and that they will be tested. But He tells them not to worry about what they will say and assures them that something good awaits them if they endure. The word "endure" is used in the New Testament to mean perseverance, or steadfast fortitude. By enduring, they will have a triumphal adequacy to help them cope with life.

² Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 744.

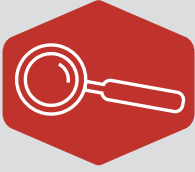


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Mark provides a unique perspective to our faith that is not talked about as often as it should be. When we look ahead, past all the accumulated woe that is sure to come to humanity, there is victory, heaven, a place of perfect peace. Because there is hope that all will end up according to God's plan, we can face the future with assurance. The words of Jesus that Mark records give his readers such hope. Consider these lessons:

- Believers should maintain faith in the Christ of the Bible.
- Believers should maintain a biblical perspective on current events.
- Believers should maintain a clear understanding of the journey they have chosen.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

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Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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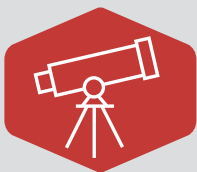
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- How does knowing you will spend eternity with Jesus help you endure the temporal turmoil right now?

- Make a list of three people to pray for and share Jesus with over the next 60 days.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 12:5. What can you glean about Jesus' warnings from the Mount of Olives?

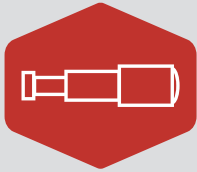
- Mark 12:13. What are two conditions for spiritual salvation that will keep us faithful until the return of Christ?



Lesson 51: Mark 13:14–23: The Coming World Ruler

Main Idea: Jesus' prophetic warnings about the future both alarm and assure His disciples, as He prepares them—and us—for the future.

Scripture: Mark 13:1–13



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

The disciples are shocked by Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. They try to picture in their minds how the Temple could be toppled. In this lesson, Jesus shares the time when the destruction would take place, that it would be when the "abomination of desolation" would stand in the midst of the Temple, a phrase also mentioned in the Book of Daniel three times. The first word of the phrase, *bdelygma* ("abomination"), suggests something repugnant to God, while the second, *erēmōsis* ("desolation"), suggests that because of the abomination the temple is left deserted, desolate. The holy and pious worshipers vacate it.¹

During the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, most likely the Roman soldiers planted Roman flags all over the Temple, flags bearing the image of Caesar. Caesar's image in this Jewish holy place was a desecration of the highest degree. The Jews understood desecration. Stories abounded,

¹ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 748.

especially of the desecration that occurred more than a hundred years before when Antiochus Epiphanes offered a pig as a sacrifice on the altar.

Jesus tells His disciples that when they see the Temple desecrated in the most horrible way possible, they are to take it as the sign to initiate an escape strategy that would include “fleeing to the mountains.” However, Jerusalem was already in the mountains. It was two thousand five hundred feet above sea level. For that reason, many scholars believe Jesus is referring to the mountains across the Jordan near the city of Petra.

This escape is to take place quickly, no matter what physical conditions they find themselves in. Even pregnant and nursing women are to flee quickly lest their children be killed. Even if it is winter time and the Jordan river is flood-swollen, they should find a way to cross the river to get to the safe haven of Petra. Jesus tells His disciples that what they are about to face will be the most horrible disaster any generation has ever seen, and according to historical records, during Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 AD, 1.1 million people were killed. But Jesus assures His disciples He is in control even during this time of destruction. In fact, God limited His judgment to help preserve the elect.

Jesus says there will be an additional sign that the time of persecution is close: False Christs will appear, even deceiving people by performing supposed miracles in order to gain control over them. But, armed with the truth, the disciples will be ready, fully prepared to act in the way Jesus has told them to act when the day comes.

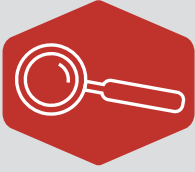


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

The New Testament has only one book that can be classified as prophecy: Revelation. However, Matthew, Mark, and Luke each include a prophetic chapter. Mark 13 starts with the imminent truth of the destruction of Jerusalem and moves quickly across the years to the second coming of Jesus. In this passage, Jesus speaks about the time of judgment leading up to His second coming. Certainly, Mark is referencing the judgement of God on the Jewish people of Jerusalem in 70 AD. However, this passage is also prophetic of the judgment coming upon all who reject Jesus. Consider these lessons:

- Jesus gives the believer markers along the way to help them be ready for the second coming of Jesus.
- The world stage is set for a charming, charismatic leader to emerge as the savior of the world systems.
- The world stage is being set for the persecution of Christians.
- The believer today is not running to the mountains but running to Jesus.
- The believer does not have to face the future uninformed.



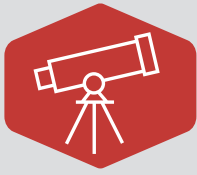
The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

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- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

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- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

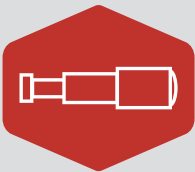
- Mark 13:14. What are three observations you can make from this note?



Lesson 52: Mark 13:24–27: The Revealed Christ

Main Idea: When it comes to the end of the world, believers may not know everything that will happen, but they can know that Jesus will certainly return.

Scripture: Mark 13:24–27



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This lesson from Mark is a very concise account of the greatest event to occur in human history since the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. The previous prophetic words from Jesus apply to the time leading up to the destruction in Jerusalem in 70 AD and to the present day leading up to His second coming, whereas this section seems to exclusively pertain to the time of the second coming. “In those days” (v. 24) is a common OT expression having eschatological associations (cf. Jeremiah 3:16, 18; 31:29; 33:15–16; Joel 3:1; Zechariah 8:23).¹

Revelation 6-18 provides a detailed account of the Great Tribulation, which the writer John breaks into three parts. First is the breaking of the seven seals on the scroll. Second is the blowing of the seven trumpets. Third is the pouring out of the seven vials that contain the wrath of God. These three sets of events

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 750.

all end in the same way with natural disasters and death to many inhabitants of the earth. During the Great Tribulation, as described in Revelation, over one-half of all the world's residents will die. This is the judgement of God poured out on the earth because of humanity's unbelief.

Jesus tells of great destruction and upheaval. It is as if God carefully measures out His wrath to accomplish His purpose, to redeem the earth, and eventually to create a new heaven and earth. Jesus then talks about the greatest event in the future of the believer: The clouds will open, and He will come forth with great power. The great emphasis of these verses is on disclosure and triumph.²

² Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 750.

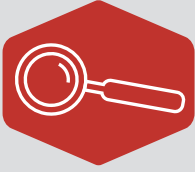


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Over the years, when the topic of end times comes up, many Christians grow glassy-eyed and uninterested. When the Book of Revelation is mentioned, statements are made such as, "I just don't get that book. It is too hard to understand." Interestingly, there are Christians who know every detail about the Lord of the Rings trilogy but do not want to know about the second coming of Jesus. Consider these lessons:

- A believer knows that the tribulation is the process of God purifying the earth.
- A believer has as their focus the return of Jesus.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Why does the study of end-time events not get the attention it should?

- Read 2 Peter 3:10-18. What are two things you can glean about the end times?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the FireBible article "False Teachers" and answer the accompanying questions.

- Why do you think God allows some false teachers to preach, and even do signs and wonders?

- Why is it not good to always judge a believer's spirituality based on whether they flow in "signs and wonders?"

- Describe the private life of a false teacher.

- Many false teachers do not begin their ministry falsely. What leads them astray?

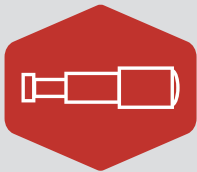
- What are some ways that false teachers can gain influence?



Lesson 53: Mark 13:28–37: Jesus Is Coming—Are You Ready?

Main Idea: This lesson concerns Jesus' instructions to His disciples, and all believers, to watch for His coming and stay ready for it.

Scripture: Mark 13:28–37



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In this text from Mark, Jesus seems to be urging His disciple to see what He has seen by His prophetic eye. To help His disciples have clear vision, He give them signs. Signs are meant to point to a conclusion—in this case, the same conclusion that Jesus has to His ministry.

Jesus offers His disciples a parable. His goal in these verses is to answer the two questions in Mark 13:4. Jesus tells His disciples that although they cannot know the exact hour of His coming, they can certainly read the signs. The parable Jesus shares simply states that just as a person can tell the seasons by watching the changes in a fig tree, they can also look through eyes of faith to see signs of the second coming. The parable is essentially an antidote to despair.¹ And the conclusion the disciples should reach from seeing the signs is that the time of Jesus' coming is very near.

Jesus says, “This generation will not pass away until all these things have

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 751.

taken place.” This statement is difficult to understand. He may be using the word “generation” in verse 34 to refer to the people of God’s kingdom from His ascension until His return. Jesus saw the time between these two great events as the period for fulfillment of His work by His bride, the Church. He was looking at a continual generation of faith-filled believers who would keep the work progressing and growing until it culminated in His revelation.

Jesus then tells His disciples that the day and hour of His coming is a closely guarded secret by God, but that they should watch for that day. *Blepete* (“be on guard”) is the keynote of the entire discourse (v. 33), and *gar* (“for”—not translated in NLT) states the reason watchfulness is necessary.² Jesus gives a clear word picture of a person who has a large house with many servants. As he is preparing to leave on an extended journey, he assigns duties and gives specific orders to each servant. He specifically commands the doorkeeper to stay alert. It would stand to reason that all the servants know the rules of the house, when work began and ended, and how to carry out their assignments. Each one had to be fulfilled because the master of the household could return without warning and would expect to see everyone doing as He’d commanded.

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 753.

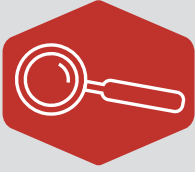


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Jesus can see the whole picture, beginning to end. He can see His kingdom coming. Humanity, even many of those who are believers, tend to see their life as the time between our birth and death alone, failing to perceive that they have a place in the larger, longer story of God's kingdom. As a result, they fail in their responsibility to keep working within the kingdom, to carry out their God-given assignments. God's plan is to entrust the believer with the responsibility of continuing His work during our short life span while keeping the perspective of the whole picture ever before our eyes. Consider these lessons:

- Kingdom signs are readable.
- Kingdom signs prepare the believe for the next step in the redemption process.
- Kingdom work is transgenerational.
- Kingdom promises are secure.
- Believers' duty is not to speculate about His coming but prepare for it.
- Believers' duty is not to get so immersed in today that eternity is forgotten.
- Believers' duty is to faithfully fulfill their given assignments.
-



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

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 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

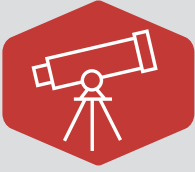
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Read 2 Timothy 3:1-14. What are three things you can glean concerning the last days?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very prepared and 4 being unprepared, rate how prepared you are for Jesus' coming. How can you improve your preparedness?

- Describe how you can be watchful, studious, and ready for His coming.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

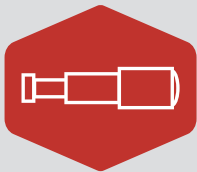
- Mark 13:35. Why should believers remain spiritually alert and faithful to Christ?



Lesson 54: Mark 14:1–9: A Deep Love for Jesus

Main Idea: An extravagant act of worship offends the disciples, and Jesus offers a surprising response that can shape the way we worship, if we allow it to.

Scripture: Mark 14:1–9



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Thousands of Jews have come to Jerusalem to prepare for Passover. While these Jews are making plans to celebrate Passover, the chief priests and scribes are making a different plan, to kill Jesus in such a way and at such a time that the crime will not cause the common people to revolt.

Each evening, Jesus and His disciples leave the crowds and commotion of Jerusalem and retreat to Bethany, to the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Mark tells the reader that they leave that house to dine in the house of Simon, who was once a leper. John 12 has them staying at the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. However, the house is not as important as what happens inside it. Jesus is reclining on pillows around the table of food when Mary comes near to Him. She breaks open a container of very expensive perfume. Craig Keener says, “many people preferred semi-transparent alabaster bottles for expensive ointments; sealing it in such a container would preserve its fragrance, but once

the bottle was broken, one would need to use up the perfume immediately.”¹ Mark states that she pours the perfume over Jesus’ head, filling the room with fragrance. John lets us know that, in the process, Mary also pours the perfume on Jesus’ feet, then washes Jesus’ feet with her tears and dries them with her hair.

Immediately, the disciples protest her actions. Mark uses the word *embrimaomai* (“to be angry,” “to express violent displeasure”) to describe the feeling of the disciples toward Mary.² The cost of the perfume was equivalent to three hundred days’ wages. Even by current standards, it would have cost an extravagant amount of money. One disciple laments that the perfume has been wasted. Another says it could have been sold and the proceeds used to feed the poor. None who speak are happy with what Mary has done.

Jesus defends her. First, He declares her deed beautiful. Her action of anointing Jesus with a bottle of expensive perfume was a beautiful expression of her love and devotion to him, and she should not be berated.³ Second, He points out that the poor and their needs will always be with them, but He will not always be physically present. Third, Jesus says what Mary has done is a Messianic act: She anointed Jesus for the death He must die. Jesus concludes by informing the disciples that what Mary did will be immortalized by preachers of the gospel for all time. She will never be forgotten.

1 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 165.

2 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 756.

3 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 756.

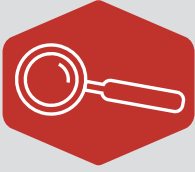


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Peter, Matthew, and Judas most likely felt it was their duty to put Mary in her place. There is no record of anybody joining Mary in paying such homage to Jesus. "Extravagance" is a word not often used in connection with service to God or with living the Christian life. Yet there is no way to read this passage without thinking that what the woman does when she anoints Jesus with the expensive perfume is extravagant. Consider these lessons:

- Everybody has an alabaster box to lavish on Jesus.
- Everyone has an opportunity to worship.
- Everyone has detractors and critics to their worship.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
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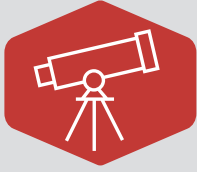
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- When you hear “extravagant worship” what comes to your mind?

- On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very extravagant and 4 being very frugal, rate your worship to God. How can you improve?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

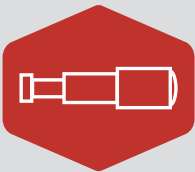
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 55: Mark 14:10–26: Betrayal, Sacrifice, and Celebration

Main Idea: Jesus reveals himself as Messiah to the disciples in a new way, marking the beginning of a new covenant, a new era, in which all believers can participate.

Scripture: Mark 14:10–26



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Judas has been around the Temple enough to know where to find the chief priests; he goes directly there, his greed driving him to be strong as he approaches these powerful religious leaders. When he opens his mouth, out come awful words: “I am here to talk to you about Jesus of Nazareth. I understand you want to catch Him away from the crowd. I may be able to lead you to Him if the price is right.” Judas’s offer to betray Jesus was readily accepted by the chief priests and teachers of the law because, being on the inside, he could choose the most opportune time to hand Jesus over to them.¹

About 6:00 p.m. Jesus brings the rest of His disciples into the room. They gather around the table and begin the process of commemorating the release of their ancestors from Egypt, when the death angel took the firstborn of every home in Egypt except those homes marked with lamb’s blood. The meal is marked by the reciting of Scripture, the eating of vegetables, roasted lamb,

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 757.

and unleavened bread, and the drinking of four goblets of wine. It would close with the singing of the words recorded in Psalms 113–118.

Everything progresses as usual until Jesus raises the third cup of wine. The first cup of wine marked the blessing of God upon the meal. The second cup was used to tell the story of the Exodus. The third cup was the cup of thanksgivings, and the fourth was the *hallal*, or praise, to conclude the proceedings.

But something unexpected happens. Jesus breaks with tradition. The whole evening is fashioned to rehearse the saving of God’s people by God’s great act. It is the celebration of salvation that was given to the Israelites in Egypt. When Jesus and the disciples take the meal, they are partaking in the victory given to their ancestors in Egypt hundreds of years earlier. But this time Jesus has a different agenda.

Jesus breaks the bread and distributes it to His disciples, saying, “Take it; it is My body.” In the context of the Passover, the disciples know that, just as the bread on the table represents the suffering of their ancestors during the exodus, so Jesus is saying that the bread that they are holding represents His body’s suffering. While His disciples are thinking about this, Jesus takes another step in His revelation to them. He lifts the cup, the cup of thanksgiving, and changes the script, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” Jesus is telling His disciples in a few words that all the things they have been repeating for years have now come to them in the physical form of the Messiah right in front of them. Jesus is encouraging His disciples to drink from the cup as a sign of their acceptance of this new covenant—beginning with an exodus out of the life of slavery to sin and death—which would be sealed by Jesus’ own blood in a few hours.



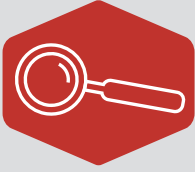
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

In this passage, Judas sees Mary “waste” all that valuable perfume and it pushes him over the edge. Anger and greed take over his life. He knows the chief priests are looking for a way to kill Jesus, so Judas decides to find them and extort money from them to help their cause.

In these verses, Mark also tells the story of the disciples’ last Passover meal with Jesus. Jesus wants them to remember that they are living in the days of the Messiah. He wants them to know that He has been attested to by God himself as the Anointed One of Israel, and that He is the divine Peacemaker through His own blood. Consider these lessons:

- For the believer, our relationship with Jesus is worth more than anything money or possessions can give.
- For the believer, partaking in the Lord’s Supper symbolizes our identification with Christ’s death on the cross to provide salvation and healing.
- For the believer, partaking in the Lord’s Supper is a public vow of our faithfulness to Christ who saved by His blood.
- For the believer, partaking in the Lord’s Supper helps us remember what Jesus did on the cross.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

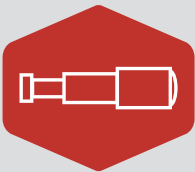
- Mark 14:21. Why does Jesus think it would better if a person is not born rather than to reject His forgiveness and leadership?



Lesson 56: Mark 14:27–31: Jesus Knows Us Best and Still Loves Us Most

Main Idea: As seen in Peter’s life, Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves—and loves us, seeing beyond our failures to what we can become through Him.

Scripture: Mark 14:27–31



The Author’s Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God’s Word.

Jesus and His disciples finish their Passover meal with a hymn. As they depart their borrowed room, Jesus predicts that all of His disciples will fall away because of what is about to happen to Him. However, He promises that He will be raised from the dead and see them again in Galilee. Craig Keener gives this insight, “Jewish people in this period were not expecting a resurrection of a given person distinct from the resurrection of the whole nation.”¹ This might be the reason Jesus’ disciples appear to ignore this part of Jesus’ statement. When the Shepherd (Jesus) is struck, the sheep (the disciples) will be scattered. The quotation is from Zechariah 13:7 and clearly indicates that the death of Jesus is the result of the action of God and that it results in the scattering of the sheep.² Peter speaks up with a heartfelt declaration. He essentially tells Jesus that he will stay true even if everyone else fails. Jesus

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 167.

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 762.

prophecies that Peter will deny that he ever knew Him before morning. Peter boldly proclaims, “I would literally die before I would deny you.” But Peter did not know how weak he really was—nor did the rest of the disciples know their weakness, for they quickly chimed in with him to declare their allegiance (cf. 14:50, 71–72).³

³ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 762.

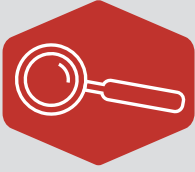


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Peter's story is so human. We can relate to a man who misses the mark that Jesus has for him, a man who believes he is much stronger than he turns out to actually be. Yet Peter's story is also divine. Jesus restores Peter, and afterwards Peter becomes a driving force in the expansion of Christianity worldwide. Peter's story contains a mixture of reckless faith and disappointing failure. Consider the following lessons:

- Believers are prone to fall short of God's divine will for our lives.
- Believers can find hope for restoration.
- Believers should not allow bad moments to define them.



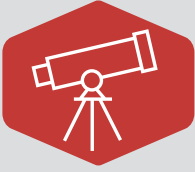
The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

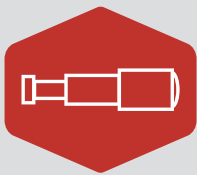
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 57: Mark 14:32-42: Jesus Prayed

Main Idea: This lesson looks at the prayer process Jesus goes through as He prepares for His crucifixion and why prayer is still important for believers.

Scripture: Mark 14:32-42



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Jesus' most famous prayer is usually called "The Lord's Prayer." Yet no one knows when or where Jesus prayed it. His most well-known spot for prayer was Gethsemane, a word which means olive press. This is the setting for this lesson. Gethsemane was a garden on the side of the Mount of Olives just across the Kidron Valley from the Temple in Jerusalem.

In verse 32, Jesus divides His disciples into two groups. Eight are left somewhere near the entrance to the garden, which had become a favorite spot for the entire group to meet. He admonishes them not to fall into temptation. Then Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with Him a little deeper into the garden and asks them to stay there and be awake and vigilant with Him.

Jesus walks a few steps past these three disciples, falls on His face, and begins to pray. Matthew says that Jesus falls on His face and prayed (Matthew 26:39). Luke 22:41 records that Jesus kneels. Mark says that Jesus falls to the ground. One thing is certain: Jesus assumes a posture of humility, surrender, and worship to God.

The New Testament word for worship is *proskuneo*, which means to reverence. The idea is of one kneeling before a king to kiss his hand. The kneeling posture can indicate a posture of willingness to obey. However, Jesus expresses a battle between human will and God's will. He prays the same prayer three times, which causes the angels to take note.

The disciples cannot manage to stay awake. Craig Keener sheds some insight to the disciples falling asleep when he says, "people often stayed awake late on Passover to discuss God's redemption, but on this particular Passover the disciples slept."¹ Jesus had outlined what happens when one does not stay alert during difficult times: People can open themselves up to temptation, weaken their spiritual resolve, cave into the weakness of flesh, and miss their calling to watch with Jesus. Even though this process of prayer and watching is hard on Jesus' physical body, it brings Him strength. It is through the prayer process that Jesus has the opportunity to ascertain the will of God, bring His flesh into compliance with the will of God, build the resolve in His own spirit that He will need, and be ministered to by angels.

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), pg. 167.

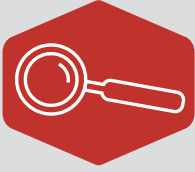


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Followers of Jesus are called disciples. By definition, a disciple is “one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another.” Disciples not only listen to and accept a dogma, but they also copy a lifestyle. Copying the lifestyle of Jesus means learning to do what He did, talk like He talked, and be like Him in inward character. In this portion of Scripture, Mark reveals that Jesus was a person of prayer. Therefore, anyone wishing to be His disciple should develop this important discipline. Consider these lessons:

- Disciples should have a place (location) for prayer.
- Disciples should remember that prayer strengthens.
- Disciples should realize that prayer helps to fight the enemy.
- Disciples should remember that prayer is the key to knowing and doing God's will.



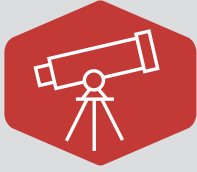
The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
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- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

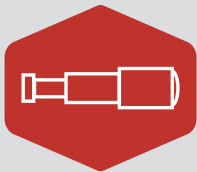
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 58: Mark 14:43–52: See You Later, Lord

Main Idea: Judas' disturbing betrayal of Jesus challenges us to consider our own motives and weaknesses with sober honesty and a prayerful heart.

Scripture: Mark 14:43–52



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

The chief priests take a while to assemble men who will accompany them to arrest Jesus. When they're ready, they arm themselves with clubs and sticks in case the disciples put up a fight. Judas knows the exact place to take this group because He knows Jesus usually prays in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. Jesus is there, and His disciples have had time enough to finish praying and are on their way out of the garden. Perhaps they were headed to Mary and Martha's house in Bethany to get some sleep.

Judas arrives out of the darkness and approaches Jesus, greeting Him with words of endearment and the kind of kiss a son would plant on his father's cheek after returning home from a journey. This is the signal Jesus' accusers are waiting. Craig Keener says, "the kiss is necessary because darkness made it harder to recognize Jesus."¹ The band of Temple guards immediately grabs Jesus to arrest Him.

¹ Kenner, Craig. The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), pg. 168.



Peter cannot tolerate seeing the Temple guards lay their hands on Jesus, and he reacts violently, pulling a sword and slicing off the ear of a guard named Malchus (Luke 22:50–51; Matthew 26:51; John 18:10–12). Jesus promptly heals Malchus and rebukes Peter for his action. There is no record of any other disciple protesting Jesus' arrest.

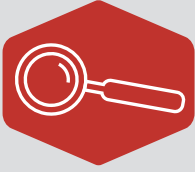


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Judas wanted more than he had. The possibility of cashing in on his knowledge of and relationship with Jesus overwhelmed him and he had to try. When Judas had an opportunity to leave the Passover celebration Jesus was holding with His disciples, he took it, going to find the chief priests. With them, he negotiated a price for Jesus' betrayal, thirty pieces of silver—the price of the redemption of a common slave. Judas traded his relationship with Christ for a small sum of money, setting into motion the sequence of events in this passage. Consider these lessons:

- When a person fails to believe, they will betray.
- When disciples fail to pray, they will desert.
- When a disciple is motivated by impulsive love, they can be misdirected.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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 - » Where is this passage taking place?

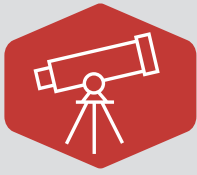
 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

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- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

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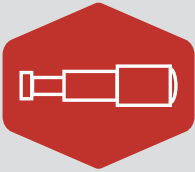
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 59: Mark 14:53–65: The Unjust Trial

Main Idea: Jesus faces a stacked jury in a mockery of a trial as He prepares to fulfill His purpose on earth for our sake.

Scripture: Mark 14:53–65



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

The location of this passage is the house of Caiaphas, the high priest for the Jews. The time is early on Crucifixion Day, that is, Good Friday. Jesus' trial took place in two stages: a religious trial followed by a civil one. The religious court of Israel was presiding over the alleged trial called the Sanhedrin. Craig Keener says about the Sanhedrin, "A Sanhedrin was a senate, or municipal assembly; Judea's chief assembly was in Jerusalem, and they normally met in the assembly hall in the temple called the Chamber of Hewn Stone, where they sat in a semicircle with the high priest in the center."¹ On one side are the scribes, the law keepers, elders, and faith keepers. On the other side of the room is Jesus, brought there to defend himself in what turns out to be a mockery of a trial.

A slate of witnesses is brought before Caiaphas. Each proves to be unreliable. The only testimony these men can give is that Jesus had said, "I am able to destroy the Temple of God and to build it in three days." Using this small

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 169.

piece of evidence, the high priest accuses Jesus. But Jesus refuses to speak until He is asked the question of the ages: Is he really the Son of God? To that question Jesus replies, “I am . . .” Had Jesus refused to answer this question, the Sanhedrin would have had to devise some other plan.²

He continues His response by giving them a word picture of where He is going and what He is going to be doing, saying to the high priest, “. . . you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.” The priests, familiar with Old Testament Scripture, understand the implication Jesus is making. He is saying, “Yes, I am the Son of God, and you will see it for yourself in just a little while.” Jesus’ affirmation of messiahship is followed by a Son-of-Man saying that brings together Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110:1. The two main ideas are the enthronement of the Son of Man and his eschatological coming.³

Jesus also uses this moment to announce that He is coming again, telling His accusers He is “. . . coming in the clouds of heaven.” Spitting and hitting were traditional means of expressing rejection and repudiation (cf. Numbers 12:14; Deuteronomy 25:9; Job 30:10; Isaiah 50:6).⁴ In response, they spit on Him, beat Him, and mock Him because they cannot handle His true identity. Those who hear Jesus speak these words accuse Him of blasphemy and sentence Him to death. The priests surely must have thought once they put Jesus in the grave, they would be finished with Him.

² Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 769.

³ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 769.

⁴ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 770.

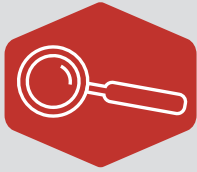


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

We live in a complicated and strange time. In an effort to be politically correct and not cause offense, many have left out what is at the very core of Christianity—the name of Jesus. Secular culture has largely successfully relegated those who believe in Jesus to being immoral, intolerant, and dangerous. Consider these lessons:

- Every person must open their eyes to Jesus for themselves.
- Every person prepares for the return of Jesus.
- Every person must respond to the claims of Jesus.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

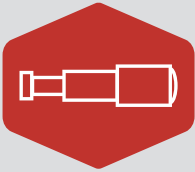
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Lesson 60: Mark 14:66-72: A Lack of Commitment

Main Idea: This lesson looks at Peter's denial of Jesus and his realization that Jesus knew his weakness better than he knew it himself.

Scripture: Mark 14:66-72



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

When Jesus is taken inside the house of the high priest, Caiaphas, John barges in to see what is happening, but Peter stands outside in the courtyard. Peter was in the background waiting to see what would happen to Jesus. One thought to consider is just the fact that Peter is there watching from a distance indicates his love for Him. A servant girl challenged Peter that he was one of Jesus' disciples. Peter was adamant about not being a follower of Jesus that he called down curses on himself. Craig Keener says about curses, "the curses Peter utters are not vulgar words; rather, he vows that he does not know the man, invoking curses on himself if he is lying."¹

When the investigation at the house ends and Jesus is about to be dragged off to see Pilate, Jesus is taken out near where Peter is standing. He turns and looks right into Peter's eyes. Three times Peter had been questioned and three times he had denied that he even knew Jesus. When he realizes that what Jesus predicted about him had come true, Peter is crushed and runs away and finds a place to weep.

¹ Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 171.

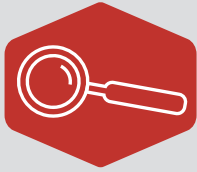


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

From the first time Jesus saw Peter, He knew what He could make of him if Peter would yield his life to Him. Although Peter loved Jesus and was concerned for Him, Peter's love did not stand the test of fear. Like all of us, Peter had the right to choose. He could have chosen to end up like Judas, or he could choose to run to Jesus with his shame. Consider these lessons:

- Life is filled with good and bad moments, it is up to each person, not to allow the bad moments to define them.
- Bad moments can cause instability in our life if not handled properly.
- Bad moments do not have to be fatal.



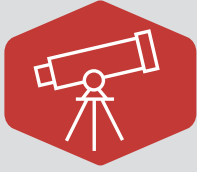
The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

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Application:

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 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

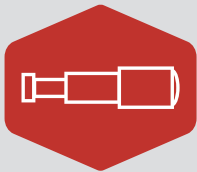
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 61: Mark 15:1-20: Introducing the King

Main Idea: This lesson explores the characters of Pilate, Barabbas, and Jesus through the events leading up to Jesus' death.

Scripture: Mark 15:1-20



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Three main characters fill the lines of this passage of Scripture. The first character is Pilate, a shrewd politician. He had become a landowner in Italy which gave him status that he could not experience any other way. Pilate joined a class of people who were deployed by the Roman emperor to rule over small divisions of the empire. Pilate was assigned to the troubled spot of Israel. His job was to put down insurrection against the Roman government, which had been incited and financed by the Jewish nobility. Pilate aspired to a greater assignment, so he did what he thought necessary to keep the land calm, no matter the cost.

In the early morning, Pilate is roused to come out of his quarters and hear another complaint from the Jewish nobility that has given him so much trouble. Craig Keener gives some insight about the time of this meeting. He says, "Roman officials like Pilate would meet with clients and members of the public from dawn until about noon, so they must have Jesus ready for Pilate

very early.”¹ The Jewish leaders have charged Jesus with insurrection. They tell Pilate that Jesus claims to be the Jewish Messiah, teaches against paying taxes to Rome, and is in general a bad man.

Pilate dutifully begins to question Jesus, who openly admits He is the Messiah. At that point the chief priests jump in with questions which Jesus will not answer. Keener again points out, “Roman law did not interpret silence as an admission of guilt, but a defendant who persistently refused to answer could be convicted by default.”² Impressed with Jesus’ silence, Pilate intends to make a judgment the Jewish leaders will not like. He sees absolutely nothing in Jesus to warrant crucifixion. As predicted, the Jewish leaders are not happy.

Since Pilate does not want to take a chance that the emperor might not agree with his decision, he figures a way out of the dilemma. Pilate decides to be kind to the Jews during their Passover season, releasing a prisoner who would otherwise be executed. He offers to release Jesus, but the people demand release of another prisoner. Pilate finds himself in a situation where all he feels he can do is release Barabbas. Pilate is haunted by his own conclusion that Jesus is not guilty of any sin or fault that merits death, but he has backed himself into a corner and must now release the person convicted of a crime and sentence Jesus to be crucified.

The second character in this passage is Barabbas. He would do the dirty work for people who wanted to overthrow Rome but did not have the nerve to openly lead the attack. Barabbas represents a group of people who make their living outside the law, in a realm where no law rules except that of the biggest sword. Keener says, “Pilate apparently regards Jesus as both more popular and less harmful than the revolutionary Barabbas.”³

The third character in this passage is Jesus. Ruthless accusations come against Jesus. Baseless charges of insurrection and treason against the Roman government are being hurled at Pilate against Him. Adding salt to the wound is the fact that Jesus is being charged by His own people, who hate the very government to which they are appealing. Pilate quiets the crowd and then addresses Jesus who freely admits to being the Jewish Messiah but says nothing more. Jesus is framed with false accusations but does not defend himself. Hatred is evident in everything said against Him, but He does not respond.

1 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 171.

2 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 171.

3 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 171.

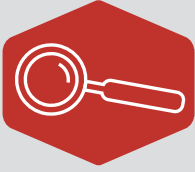


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Jesus was really on trial in the court of public opinion. He heard all that transpired and knew what the verdict would be because His purpose was to lay down His life. When Pilate was ready to make the judgment of death by crucifixion, he ordered that Jesus be scourged and beaten. Through all of this, Jesus did not utter a word. Consider these lessons:

- Jesus is the obedient king.
- Jesus is the true king.
- Jesus is the king who took our place.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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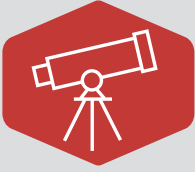
 - » When is this passage occurring?

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Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

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- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

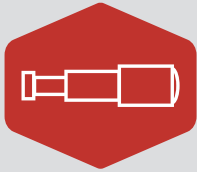
- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Lesson 62: Mark 15:21–41: What Does the Cross Mean?

Main Idea: This lesson looks deeply into Jesus' death on the cross and what it means for anyone who wants the new life He offers.

Scripture: Mark 15:21–41



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Jesus has been sentenced by Pilate to execution, and He has been flogged, which at times had killed people. Jesus has certainly lost a lot of blood. Then the Romans set the cross piece on Him. It probably weighs around eighty to a hundred pounds, and Jesus must carry it through the city. The intent is to take Him outside the city walls, where He will be crucified. Along the way, Jesus apparently becomes too weak to carry the cross. The soldiers grab a man from the crowd named Simon of Cyrene to help Jesus bear its weight. Cyrene is modern-day eastern Libya. Simon is Jewish and has come to worship at the Jewish Passover.

Jesus is taken to a hill called Golgotha, which means the place of a skull. Local tradition calls it this because supposedly it is where Goliath's head is buried. When David killed Goliath, he stood over him and chopped off his head (1 Samuel 17:51). After showing it to King Saul, David took it to Jerusalem. It could have been given that name because so many deaths occurred there.

In verse 23, the soldiers offer Jesus wine mixed with myrrh, which would be a sedative meant to relax the person about to be crucified. Craig Keener says, “Many scholars suggest that the myrrh had narcotic effects; others demur, but at the very least, the alcohol in the wine could help deadened sensitivity to pain.”¹ This was not an act of mercy but efficiency. The Romans cared little about a condemned criminal who was going to be crucified. What they did care about was being able to easily drive a nail through hands and feet. It is 9:00 in the morning. The hill Jesus is crucified on is not far outside the city but on a main boulevard outside the gates. Since it is Passover, thousands of people are going past this place of crucifixion. This is Rome’s way to intimidate the people and say, “Don’t mess with Rome.”

As people stare at and mock Jesus, He is hanging there naked, humiliated, and bearing the weight of all sins. Being naked was shameful for Jews. For three hours, Jesus suffers the physical effects of crucifixion, which is really death by suffocation. From 9:00 until noon, the Gospels record Jesus as saying three things. The first is, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” The second is addressed to the man being crucified beside Him: “Today, you will be with me in paradise.” And the third is addressed to John and Mary when He says, “Mary, behold, your son!” and “Behold, your mother!” Jesus entrusted His mother’s care to John from that point forward.

Mark gives a commentary about several miracles that took place during the crucifixion in verses 33–41, to help the reader understand what is happening. The first miracle Mark points out is a supernatural darkness, which engulfs the area. Whatever its cause, it lasted for three hours (12:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.) and was “over the whole land,” i.e. Judah, not the whole earth. There can be little doubt that Mark understood the darkness as God’s supernatural act and associated it with his judgment.²

The second miracle is separation. Theologically, this is difficult to comprehend. It is now 3:00 P.M., which is one of the Jewish hours of prayer. Every time Jesus speaks about God in the New Testament, He calls Him Father. But now, as Jesus says, “My God, My God . . .,” quoting from Psalm 22, there is a sense of absence. Psalm 22 is a description of the crucifixion and has an explanation as to why God forsakes Jesus. He has now hung on the cross for six hours. What makes Jesus’ crucifixion different is that He not only suffers physically, but also suffers the far greater pain of God’s wrath poured out on Him for the sins of humanity.

John tells us that Jesus then says, “I thirst.” In response, someone offers Jesus a sponge full of vinegar. This is not an act of mercy because these Roman

1 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 173.

2 Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 782.

soldiers do not show mercy; they delight in showing contempt. To clean themselves after bowel movements, they would keep a sponge on a 10-inch stick in a little pot filled with vinegar. Jesus dies with the taste of wastewater and human excrement in His mouth.

The third miracle is strength: Jesus cries out in a loud voice. Although Mark does not tell readers what He says, John records that He cries out, “It is finished.” Luke records Jesus saying, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

The fourth miracle Mark records is access. The darkness is gone, and Jesus’ body is slumped on the cross. He is dead. At the moment of His death, the Temple curtain is torn, not from the bottom, as if men had done it, but from the top. Josephus says the curtain was eighty-two and a half feet tall and twenty-four feet wide. It was the thickness of a man’s hand, so heavy it required a hundred priests to move it. This curtain separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, where God’s presence lived. Nobody could go into the Holy of Holies except for the high priest. With the tearing of the curtain, it is as if God is saying, “No longer am I separated from humanity.”

The fifth miracle is an earthquake. Mark does not actually record this, but Matthew does in chapter 27:51–53, declaring that the earth shakes. Luke records that as people leave the place of the cross, they are weeping and beating their chests. But the earthquake has a purpose: The rocks are split, and graves are opened, the dead people inside actually coming back to life—a foretaste of Jesus’ own resurrection.

In verse 40, Mark uses the phrase “looking on from a distance.” He uses this phrase four times in his account, and every time, it indicates detached observation. The centurion is up close to the cross, not confused at all about who Jesus is. In contrast, the group of women who have followed Jesus stand at a distance. They do not really know what to make of the scene. They are confused and unsure.

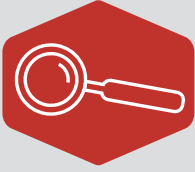


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

The cross is central to the life of Jesus. He came to die. A theological understanding of the cross is essential. How do you impact the world? The power of the cross. What do you say to someone who asks if you can know God? You take them to the cross. A clear understanding helps one to know who Jesus is, what He has done, and what He has done in our life. What does the cross mean? Consider these lessons:

- God pours out divine judgment on sin.
- Jesus took our place.
- Jesus was our sin substitute.
- Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves.
- Jesus controlled His death right down to the moment.
- Jesus' death and resurrection means that believers will live again.
- If you get too far from the cross, you will get confused about who Jesus is.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

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Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
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 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?
- How would you describe who Jesus is?
- Describe what you think when you think about the cross.



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

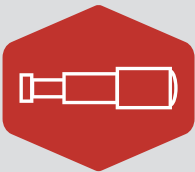
- Mark 15:33. What did you glean from this note?



Lesson 63: Mark 15:42-47: No Ordinary Joe

Main Idea: This lesson offers insight into Joseph of Arimathea, a man many can relate to when it comes to following Jesus despite what others may think.

Scripture: Mark 15:42-47



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This burial account is mentioned in all four gospels. Jesus must be in the tomb before the sun sets in order to be raised on the following third day. In the Jewish calendar, if something happens at any part of the day, it is tantamount to the whole day. This requires permission from the Roman government for Jesus to be taken off the cross and placed in a tomb. It also requires finding a tomb, and not just any tomb will do. In order to fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 53, Jesus has to be buried in a rich man's tomb.

The main character in this passage appears nowhere in any gospel account until this moment, and then he appears in all four accounts, which is notable. Very few things are mentioned in all four gospels, including the feeding of the 5,000, the resurrection of Jesus, and the burial of Jesus. Each writer give insight into this man. Luke 23:50-51 offers six facts about him: his name, that he is from the Jewish town of Arimathea, that he is a member of the council, that he is a good and righteous man, that he has not consented to the action

of the council, and that he is looking for the kingdom of God. Matthew 27:57 provides some additional information: he is a man of wealth and a disciple (learner, follower) of Jesus. And John 19:38 states that he is afraid of anyone knowing he is a follower of Jesus. The request from Joseph to take the body of Jesus was courageous. By identifying with Jesus, he could have appeared to be a partner with Jesus. Craig Keener points out another reason Josephus request could be dangerous, “the wealthy were sometimes targeted with charges so leaders could execute them and seize their property.”¹

In 1941, archeologists made a discovery of several stone boxes called ossuaries. During Jesus’ day, it was customary to wrap a deceased person’s body and place it into a stone cave. The body would have to be washed from the blood before it could be wrapped for burial in the linen clothes. After the body had decayed, the bones would be put into an ossuary with the person’s name carved onto it, to be stacked with other ossuaries in the cave. Craig Keener offers some insight to the burial process. He says, “after a body had been prepared for burial it would be left to decompose for one year; then the eldest son or other closet family member would return, gather the bones for burial in a box and deposit them in a slot on the tomb wall.”²

1 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), pg. 174.

2 Kenner, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), pg. 174.

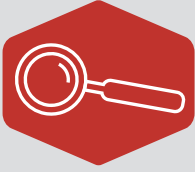


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Ordinarily a relative or close friend would have made the request for the body. Apparently, Jesus' mother was so upset that she did not ask. Except for John, the other disciples had left. The Lord used this person who was rich, who was devout, who was waiting for the kingdom of God, and who was afraid of what others might think. For the first 15 chapters of Mark, there is no mention of Joseph, but in the end, it is clear that he finally finds his courage.

- Courage requires a cost.
- Courage requires convictions.
- Courage will require a conversation.
- Courage requires commitment.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

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 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe a time when you failed to display courage.

- Describe a time when you did display courage.

- Read Revelation 21:7-8. What can you learn about courage?

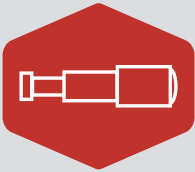
- What are the points on your compass that will chart your course in life?



Lesson 64: Mark 16:1-8: The Resurrection

Main Idea: Mark's account of Jesus' resurrection offers the perspective of the women who were startled and dismayed to find an empty tomb.

Scripture: Mark 16:1-8



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This account is recorded in all four Gospels. Each story is told from the writer's unique perspective, which gives validity to the account of the resurrection. Each writer is telling from his vantage point what happened on that most historic and significant morning. Mark writes during the time of Nero's persecution of Christians.

In these verses of Mark 16, the burial process for Jesus had not been completed. Normally, a person dying in Jerusalem would be buried within twenty-four hours with a complete funeral. But Jesus had been buried quickly the afternoon of His death, before the start of the Passover at 6:00 p.m. That meant that after the Passover, which corresponded that year to the Sabbath, they would need to return and finish the final burial preparation.

The women are walking to the tomb. The women believe they will be adding some spices to what Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus already provided when they placed Jesus in the tomb. They expect the grave to be sealed shut. Their chief concern is how they will be able to get the tomb open to finish the burial process. The dead bodies were usually anointed with oil and then rinsed

with water. In some instances if the deceased person is special, spices are used.

John tells us that Mary Magdalene goes on ahead of the other women. When she sees that the stone is rolled away, she goes to find Peter. Then the other two women arrive at the tomb and see the stone rolled away. Wondering what has happened, they decide to look inside the tomb and instantly see an angel. Mark tells the readers that the woman seeing an angel caused them to be alarmed. Only Mark tells us, “They said nothing to anyone,” which probably means that they were so frightened and confused that they were at first silent. After they had collected their wits, they did a lot of talking (cf. Matthew 28:8; Luke 24:9).¹

In these eight verses, Mark mentions the name of the three women, three different times (15:40, 47, 16:1). Why three times? Perhaps Mark wants his readers to know this is not a legend or myth. Mark is writing somewhere around thirty-five years after these events. He does not want it to appear that he is making up this story. Furthermore, even if Mark were trying to come up with a scheme to falsely confirm the story of what transpired, the last thing he and other writers of that time would do is use women as eyewitnesses, due to the strongly male-dominant culture.

¹ Walter W. Wessel, “Mark,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 788.

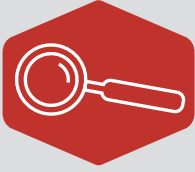


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

In this passage, Mark tells in typical fashion a quick and powerful version of the greatest event in human history, Jesus' resurrection. Mark records three different times that Jesus said He would die and rise again. You would think the disciples would have thought, "It has been three days, so perhaps we should go check out the tomb to see if He is there." You would think the women might have said, "Maybe we should go check to see if He is there before we invest our money for burial spices." In these eight verses you can see faith, grace, and mission play out. Consider these lessons:

- Encountering Jesus is not always what we expect.
- Jesus desires us to repent so we can walk in relationship with Him.
- Once we believe, we must go.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

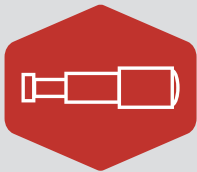
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.



Lesson 65: Mark 16:9–20: The Gospel Ministry Continues

Main Idea: This lesson explores the final verses of Mark and the signs Jesus said would commonly mark people as being His followers.

Scripture: Mark 16:9–20



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

There is a superscription in some Bibles that says, “Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include Mark 16:9–20.” People often wonder why the statement is there. Does it mean this passage does not carry as much weight, or is not as important, as the rest of Scripture?

Jesus is taken to a hill called Golgotha, which means the place of a skull. Local tradition calls it this because supposedly it is where Goliath's head is buried. When David killed Goliath, he stood over him and chopped off his head (1 Samuel 17:51). After showing it to King Saul, David took it to Jerusalem. It could have been given that name because so many deaths occurred there.

These verses have different words used nowhere else in Mark. The object of Mark 16:1–8 is different than the object of Mark 16:9–20. Mark was written somewhere around 66 AD to 70 AD and is really an account of Peter's recollection of Jesus' ministry. We know that sometime during those years Peter was martyred by Nero. We do not know with certainty what happened

to cause this addition to the last chapter of Mark, but clearly something did. What is important to note is that the early church fathers over the next century give authority and weight to these verses. They recognize these verses as part of Mark's Gospel. While it is true that a few of the earliest manuscripts do not have verses, ninety-five percent of the other compilations have it.

In this section, there are three post-resurrection appearances by Jesus. All three appearances are recorded in the other Gospels in much greater detail. Jesus issues a challenge for believers. He says that a sign, which is a distinguishing mark by which something is known, would follow those who believe. This is something that should commonly occur for a person living out the Christ life. Then Jesus lists some of the signs that would be present in such a person's life. The first sign is that they can cast out demons. A believer will be able by the power of the Holy Spirit to exercise spiritual authority over evil powers that manifest themselves in the course of everyday life. The second sign is being able to speak with new tongues. A believer will have supernatural ability to communicate with God in worship and to effectively communicate the gospel to others. The third sign is an ability to take up serpents. A believer lives under an umbrella of divine protection that shields them from the harm that could be inflicted by those who act with evil intent. The fourth sign is being able to lay hands on the sick and see them recover. A believer will be used in this spiritual gift of healing, as well as other miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. According to Craig Keener this was a "sign of the messianic era."¹

¹ Kenner, Craig. The IVP Bible Background Commentary 2nd Edition, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), pg. 175.

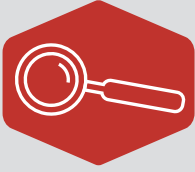


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

In this text, the benefits of living with the constant help of the Holy Spirit are enumerated. Part of this benefit is developing and deepening your spirituality as you live life reconciled to God through Jesus with the constant help of the Holy Spirit. The Christian life is one in which you have a supernatural relationship with Jesus that results in supernatural living. Consider these lessons:

- There is a call to believe.
- There is a command to go.
- There should be a continuation of Jesus' supernatural ministry.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?

 - » Where is this passage taking place?

 - » When is this passage occurring?

 - » Why is this passage important?

 - » What is happening in this passage?

 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

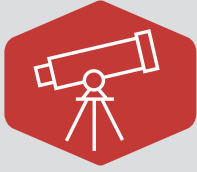
- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- What verse stood out to you? Why?

- Describe your understanding of what it means to live with the power of God active in your daily life.

- Read Ephesians 6:10-17. What can you glean from these Scriptures and daily living?

- Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-10. On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being very well and 4 being poor, rate yourself on how well you earnestly desire spiritual gifts to be evident in your life. How can you deepen your desire?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- Write down which verse from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love of God, how can you practically demonstrate the verse you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- Mark 16:9–20. What do many scholars think about these verses?
- Mark 16:9–20. Why should we accept these verses as part of our Bible?
- Mark 16:18. What two things can you glean from this note?



Using My *FireBible*

Read the FireBible article “Signs of Believers” and answer the following:

- What do signs that accompany the gospel show?

