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Lesson One

Mark: A Bird’s-Eye View

You are about to begin to study what is probably the first book ever written as a “gospel.” As with other Bible books, one of the best ways to begin is to read Mark through in one sitting from a translation such as the New International Version, the Revised Standard Version, the New Revised Standard, or the King James Version. A first reading should take about one hour. Answering the questions will, of course, take some additional time, but the amount depends upon every individual’s goals in their study of this insightful book of the Bible.

I. First Impressions of Mark

A. As you complete each chapter in your initial reading, jot down in two or three sentences what you think the author is seeking to teach you in that chapter.

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

Chapter 5:

Chapter 6:

Chapter 7:

Chapter 8:

Chapter 9:
Chapter 10:

Chapter 11:

Chapter 12:

Chapter 13:

Chapter 14:

Chapter 15:

Chapter 16:

B. Now that you have read Mark, write out your impressions of the book as a whole.
II. First Impressions from Exploring Mark
Read the “Introduction to the Book of Mark” (pp. 15-24). On the basis of your reading:
A. Provide a one-sentence statement on the purpose of Mark.

B. List the seven major themes of Mark
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.
   6.
   7.

C. Briefly discuss the three unique characteristics of Mark.

D. What can we determine about the first-century audience of Mark?

E. In two or three sentences indicate the relevance of the Gospel of Mark for our lives in the twenty-first century.
Lesson Two

Meeting Jesus
Mark 1:1–13

*Exploring Mark, Sections 1–3*

A. Read Mark 1:1 and section 1
   1. What important ideas are in this text?

   2. How does this verse set the tone for the book that follows?

   3. After reading section 1, list those items that helped you to better understand Mark 1:1.

B. Read Mark 1:2–8 and section 2
   1. What is the function of John the Baptist in these verses?

   2. What do these verses tell us about Jesus?

   3. Section 2 highlights John’s two-fold message. Outline that message and its meaning for your life.
C. Read Mark 1:9-13 and section 3
   1. List the important events in verses 9-11.

   2. What is the significance of those verses in the flow of Mark's presentation?

   3. Compare the temptation scene of verses 12, 13 with the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke.
      What is left out? What is added?

   4. According to section 3, what was the significance of Jesus’ anointing and temptation for the Gospel's first readers?

   5. What does it mean for me?
Lesson Three

From the Beginning of Jesus’ Preaching
to the Beginning of Opposition
Mark 1:14–3:6

Exploring Mark, Sections 4–11

A. Read Mark 1:14, 15 and section 4
   1. List the points in Jesus’ message.

   2. Discuss the significance of these two verses in their context. That is, discuss their significance in terms of what has preceded them and what follows.

   3. Section 4 deals in part with repentance. Summarize its teaching on that topic.

B. Read Mark 1:16–20 and section 5
   1. Compare these verses with the call of these disciples in the other three Gospels. Was this a spontaneous call or had they known Jesus before? Provide reasons for your answer.
2. Section 5 discusses Jesus making fishers of fish into fishers of people. What implications does that have for God’s use of my gifts and talents?

C. Read Mark 1:21-28 and section 6
1. List the usages of both amazed (or astonished) and authority in these verses.

2. What is Mark trying to tell his readers by the repeated use of those words?

3. Summarize the teaching of section 6 on Jesus’ authority.

D. Read Mark 1:29-45 and section 7
1. Write out your initial impression after reading these verses.
2. What do these verses tell us about Jesus?

3. Outline the four “snapshots” of section 7.

E. Read Mark 2:1-12 and section 8
   1. Here we have a new issue over authority. Why are the Jewish leaders so upset?

   2. How does Jesus answer them?

   3. Why is His answer so effective?

   4. What can I learn from section 8 regarding the effect of my personal faith on others?

F. Read Mark 2:13-17 and section 9
   1. How does the saying “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” give meaning to these verses?
2. What meaning do they have for my personal life?

3. After reading section 9, reflect on the lessons of grace.

G. Read Mark 2:18-22 and section 10
   1. What do these verses teach about the foreknowledge of Jesus?

   2. What can I learn about “new” and “old” in section 10?

H. Read Mark 2:23-3:6 and section 11
   1. What are the implications of the fact that the Sabbath was made for people rather than people for the Sabbath?

   2. What does it mean that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath?

   3. Why did Jesus go out of His way to provoke the Jewish leaders in 3:1-6?

   4. What important lessons do we learn about the Sabbath in section 11?
Lesson Four

The Struggle Intensifies: Teaching and Healing—Round #1
Mark 3:7-4:34

Exploring Mark, Sections 12-18

A. Read Mark 3:7-19 and section 12
1. What impression about Jesus’ ministry do you gain from verses 7-12?

2. What reasons can you think of as to why the calling of the disciples in verses 13-19 follows verses 7-12?

3. After reading section 12 in Exploring Mark, discuss the difference between discipleship and apostleship.

B. Read Mark 3:20-30 and section 13
1. From this passage summarize what you perceive to be Jesus’ teaching on the unpardonable sin.
2. After reading verses 20-30 in their context and section 13 in *Exploring Mark*, list those reasons that indicate that Jesus’ family might have had some justifiable concerns about Him.

3. On what basis can 3:28 be viewed as a “glorious declaration”?

C. Read Mark 3:31-35 and section 14

1. What can we learn about Jesus’ family from these verses and their parallels in the other gospels?

2. List those ways in which the reading of section 14 filled out your understanding of His family.

3. In your own words express what it means to belong to Jesus’ family.

D. Read Mark 4:1-12 and section 15

1. List the various types of soil and the result of sowing in each.
2. Why did Jesus begin to teach in parables at this point in His ministry (see section 15)?

3. In what ways does section 15 help us understand the problematic statement of verses 10-12?

E. Read Mark 4:13-20 and section 16
   1. Outline Jesus’ explanation of the results of the sowing in different types of soil.

2. In what ways does section 16 expand your understanding of Jesus’ lesson in verses 13-20?

F. Read Mark 4:21-25 and section 17
   1. What lessons can be drawn from verses 21-25?
2. What is the meaning of those verses in the ongoing context of Jesus’ relationships with His disciples and the Pharisees?

3. Discuss “hearing” after reading section 17.

G. Read Mark 4:26-34 and section 18
   1. Summarize the lesson of verses 26-29.

   2. Summarize the lesson of verses 30-34.

   3. What can we learn about the human element in seed growing from section 18?
Lesson Five

The Struggle Intensifies: Teaching and Healing—Round #2
Mark 4:35–6:13

Exploring Mark, Sections 19-23

A. Read Mark 4:35–41 and section 19
   1. What can we learn about fear and faith from this passage?

   2. How do those lessons apply to my life?

   3. According to section 19, what does this passage tell us about Jesus?

B. Read Mark 5:1-20 and section 20
   1. Outline the events in these verses.
2. What do verses 1-20 tell us about Jesus?

3. From section 20, list the “four surprises” of our passage.

C. Read Mark 5:21-34 and section 21
   1. Outline the events in these verses.

   2. What do these verses tell us about the woman?

   3. What do they tell us about Jesus?

   4. After reading section 21, discuss Jesus’ “cruelty” to the woman.
D. Read Mark 5:35–43 and section 22
1. What is the most important lesson in these verses?

2. What are the implications of these verses for the doctrines of death and resurrection?

3. After reading section 22, briefly discuss Jesus’ authority and how it relates to faith.

E. Read Mark 6:1–13 and section 23
1. Why did the people of Jesus’ hometown have problems with His ministry?

2. Put yourself in their place. How might you have reacted if Jesus had grown up as your next door neighbor?

3. Itemize the instruction that Jesus gave to the disciples before He sent them out.

4. After reading section 23, summarize Jesus’ relationship with His fellow citizens from Nazareth.
Lesson Six

Moving Beyond Galilee
Mark 6:14–8:30

Exploring Mark, Sections 24–29

A. Read Mark 6:14–29 and section 24
   1. Given the preceding context, why do you think Herod’s fears had been ignited?

   2. From verses 14–29 what additional reasons do we find for Herod’s fears?

   3. According to section 24, what is the “real meaning of John the Baptist”?

B. Read Mark 6:30–56 and section 25
   1. Outline the events in these verses.

   2. What can we learn about Jesus from these verses?
3. According to section 25, why did Jesus have to compel the disciples to get into the boat (verse 45)?

C. Read Mark 7:1-13 and section 26

1. Describe the problem between Jesus and the Jews in verses 1-8.


3. List the ways in which section 26 helps us understand verses 1-13.

D. Read Mark 7:14-23 and section 27

1. What do these verses tell us about the nature of sin?

2. What do you think verse 19 means when it says that Jesus declared all foods clean?
3. In the light of section 27, discuss the meaning of verses 14-23.

E. Read Mark 7:24-8:10 and section 28
   1. Outline the events described in 7:24-8:10.

2. Describe the “faith” of the Syrophenician woman.

3. Compare and contrast the feeding of the 4,000 in 8:1-10 with the feeding of the 5,000 in Mark 6:30-44.
4. After reading section 28, discuss Jesus’ seeming harsh approach to the Syrophoenician woman.

F. Read Mark 8:11-30 and section 29
1. After reading verses 11-30, discuss how blindness can be seen as a theme for holding these 4 paragraphs together. What does each of the paragraphs say about blindness (or sight)?

2. Keeping in mind the Jewish ideas of Messiahship, what is so remarkable about Peter’s declaration in verse 29?

3. After reading section 29, relate the partial healing of the blindness of the man in verses 22-26 to the partial healing of the disciples’ blindness in verses 27-35
Lesson Seven

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection—Round #1
Mark 8:31-9:29

Exploring Mark, Sections 30-33

A. Read Mark 8:31-33 and section 30
   1. List the elements in Jesus’ teaching in these verses.

   2. Why did Peter rebuke Jesus?

   3. After reading section 30, discuss why Jesus began His instruction on His death and resurrection at this particular time in His ministry?

   4. According to section 30, why did Jesus address Peter as Satan?
B. Read Mark 8:34-9:1 and section 31
   1. Summarize the meaning of the cross in verses 34-37. Whose is it and what is it?

   2. In what ways does the discussion in section 31 enrich our understanding of “our” cross?

   3. What is the meaning of 9:1? (See both the verse’s context and section 31.)

C. Read Mark 9:2-13 and section 32

   2. What was the meaning of the transfiguration for Jesus? For the disciples?
3. After reading section 32, discuss the “three levels” of encouragement provided by the transfiguration.

D. Read Mark 9:14-29 and section 33
   1. Outline the sequence of events in verses 14–29.

   2. What can we know about the faith of the father from this passage?

   3. What can we learn about the faith of the disciples from this passage?

   4. In what ways does section 33 help us to better understand these perplexing verses?
Lesson Eight

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection—Rounds #2 and #3
Mark 9:30-10:45

Exploring Mark, Sections 34-38

A. Read Mark 9:30-50 and section 34
   1. Outline the narrative of verses 30-50.

2. How is the idea of greatness related to each of the three paragraphs extending from verses 33 through 50? What is the central idea of greatness in each paragraph?

3. List the ways in which section 34 aids us in understanding verses 30-50.

B. Read Mark 10:1-16 and section 35
   1. In what way is “heart” problems at the center of both verses 1-12 and 13-16?
2. After reading section 35, discuss why Jesus chose to discuss hardheartedness at this point in the gospel story.

C. Read Mark 10:17-31 and section 36
   1. Summarize Jesus’ teaching on the meaning of true obedience in verses 17-22.

   2. Summarize Jesus’ teaching on salvation in verses 23-27.

   3. Summarize Jesus’ teaching on “rewards” (both positive and negative) in verses 28-31.

   4. After reading section 36, discuss the real problem of the rich young ruler.

D. Read Mark 10:32-45 and section 37
   1. List the elements of Jesus’ teaching on His death and resurrection in verses 32-34.
2. Summarize the difference between Jesus and the disciples on the nature of greatness in verses 35–45.

3. In what ways does section 37 expand our understanding of the Zebedee brothers’ problem?

E. Read Mark 10:46–52 and section 38
   1. List the characteristics of the blind man of verses 46–52.

2. Given the preceding verses and the material beginning in Mark 8:22, why do you think the Gospel brings in blindness here again?

3. After reading section 38, discuss why the blind man of verses 46-52 has been remembered in history while the “more important” rich young ruler of verses 17-22 has been forgotten.
Lesson Nine

Escalation of the Conflict Between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders—Round #1
Mark 11:1-12:17

Exploring Mark, Sections 39-42

A. Read Mark 11:1-11 and section 39
1. List the exact sequence of events in verses 1-11.

2. What kind of a welcome did Jesus receive from the people? What is the significance of verses 9 and 10?

3. According to section 39, what is the full significance of Jesus’ riding in Jerusalem?

B. Read Mark 11:12-25 and section 40
1. Discuss the relationship between verses 12-14 and 20-23?
2. Can you think of any reason as to why verses 15-19 are sandwiched in between verses 12-14 and 20-23? Be adventurous and speculate a bit if necessary.

3. How does section 40 help us understand the sandwich structure and its teaching in verses 12-25?

C. Read Mark 11:27-33 and section 41
   1. List the events in verses 27-33.

2. Why did Jesus ask the question about John? How did Jesus’ question frustrate the plan of the Jewish leaders?

3. After reading section 41, summarize the nature of the corner that Jesus had backed the Jewish leaders into.
D. Read Mark 12:1-12 and section 42
   1. List the elements in the parable of verses 1-11.

   2. Read Isaiah 5:1-7. How is a knowledge of that passage related to the Jews’ conclusion in Mark 12:12?

   3. After reading section 42, discuss how Jesus’ parable of the vineyard parallels Jewish history.

E. Read Mark 12:13-17 and section 43
   1. What is the significance in verse 13 that the Pharisees and Herod’s party were working together?

   2. Summarize the implications for church/state relations in Jesus’ teaching in verse 17.

   3. After reading section 43, list the ways in which the political situation of Palestine in Jesus’ day helps us to understand His confrontation with the Jews regarding the paying of taxes.
Lesson 10

Escalation of the Conflict Between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders—Round #2
Mark 12:18–13:37

Exploring Mark, Sections 44-50

A. Read Mark 12:18–27 and section 44
   1. What is your impression of the argument of the Sadducees in verses 18–23? On what basis are they seeking to win their argument?

   2. List the elements in Jesus’ answer to them in verses 24-27.

   3. List the ways in which section 44 helps you understand this passage.

B. Read Mark 12:28–34 and section 45
   1. Summarize Jesus’ understanding of the law of God.
2. Where is the scribe spiritually? How do you know?

3. After reading section 45, summarize in your own words the relation of the law to the many laws.

4. What does that relationship mean for Christian living?

C. Read Mark 12:35-37 and section 46

2. What has Jesus proven from the Jewish scripture?
3. After reading section 46, list the ideas it provides that help you understand verses 35-37.

**D. Read Mark 12:38-44 ans section 47**
1. Compare and contrast these two paragraphs.

2. What does each paragraph tell us about values?

3. After reading section 47, discuss what verses 38-44 teach us about God’s judgment.

**E. Read Mark 13:1-13 and section 48**
1. What precise question or questions did the disciples ask in verses 1-4?

2. What did Jesus say in verses 7 and 8 about the signs He listed?
3. After reading section 48, please note the added question in Matthew that we do not find in Mark. What is that addition? How does it enrich our understanding of Mark 13?

4. What, according to section 48, is the main lesson that we can learn about signs in Mark 13?

F. Read Mark 13:14-23 and section 49
   1. Summarize your first impressions and/or emotions as you read Mark 13:14-23.

   2. What important information has section 49’s discussion of the “abomination of desolation” contributed to your understanding of Matthew 13?

G. Read Mark 13:24-37 and section 50
   1. What is the lesson of the fig tree?
2. What is the main lesson of verses 32-37?

3. Read section 50. Why do you think Jesus gave the information about the Second Advent in Mark 13?

4. After reading section 50, analyze and summarize Jesus’ use of “watching.”
Lesson Eleven

Christ’s Passion, Part #1: The Road to Gethsemane
Mark 14:1-52

Exploring Mark, Sections 51-54

A. Read Mark 14:1-11 and section 51
   1. List the order of events in verses 1-11.

   2. What diverse lessons does this passage teach about loyalty?

   3. After reading section 51, summarize the diverse reactions to Mary’s gift.
B. Read Mark 14:12-31 and section 52

1. List the order of events found in verses 12-31.

2. Summarize Jesus’ teachings on betrayal in this passage.

3. Summarize the disciples’ response to the betrayal passage.

4. After reading section 52, discuss the implications of the relationship between the Passover and the Lord’s Supper.

C. Read Mark 14:32-43 and section 53

1. Write out your initial thoughts and/or emotions as you read this passage.

2. Describe what you think Jesus was going through in Gethsemane.
3. List from section 53 those points that have enriched your understanding of the Gethsemane event.

D. Read Mark 14:43-52 and section 54
   1. Write a personality profile of Judas from these verses.

   2. List those things that are remarkable about Jesus in this passage.

   3. According to section 54, what was the secret to Jesus’ calmness during the arrest? What are the implications of that “secret” for my life?
Lesson Twelve

Christ’s Passion, Part #2: From Gethsemane to the Cross

Mark 14:53–15:47

Exploring Mark, Sections 55–59

A. Read Mark 14:53–65 and section 55
   1. List the issues in verses 55–61.

   2. What is remarkable about Jesus’ answer to the high priest? Given the circumstances, why is His answer remarkable?


B. Read Mark 14:66–72 and section 56
   1. If Peter was such a coward, why was he at the high priest’s house?
2. Summarize your impression of Peter’s conduct in these verses. Why didn’t he do better?

3. List those items that a reading of section 56 had added to your understanding of verses 66-72.

C. Read Mark 15:1-15 and section 57
   1. List the events in verses 1-15.

2. What do you think Barabbas must have felt about the events of verses 6-15?

3. What do the events of verses 1-15 tell us about Pilate?
4. What do they tell us about Jesus?

5. In what ways does section 57 enrich our understanding of the Barabbas event?

D. Read Mark 15:16-32 and section 58
   1. List the events in verses 16-20.

   2. Describe each person or group of people at the cross and the part they play in the drama.

   3. List the points in section 58 that help fill out our understanding of Simon of Cyrene.

   4. What points does section 58 add to our understanding of crucifixion?
E. Read Mark 15:33-47 and section 59

1. List the order of events in verses 33-47.

2. What is the significance of the curtain of the Temple being torn from top to bottom in verse 38?

3. In the context of Mark’s Gospel, what is the importance of verse 39?

4. Summarize the four points made in section 59 regarding Jesus’ “God-forsaken cry.”
Lesson Thirteen

An Ending that Doesn’t End

Mark 16:1–[20]

Exploring Mark, Sections 60, 61

A. Read Mark 16:1–8 and section 60
   1. List the order of events in these eight verses.

   2. How would you have felt if you had been first at the tomb? Why?

   3. What is there about verse 8 that indicates that it is probably not the end of Mark’s version of
      the gospel (good news)?

   4. List and discuss the points of hope discussed in section 60.
B. Read Mark 16:[9-20] and section 61

1. List the separate items of information found in these verses.

2. What are your first impressions when you read verses 17 and 18?

3. As you read section 62 and as you read the notes in many Bibles, how did you feel when you discovered that these verses may not have been Mark’s original ending?

4. After examining the box on page 301, how do you feel about the “lost” content of Mark 16:9-20? What actually has been lost?

C. We may not ever know the “real ending” of Mark’s Gospel, but it undoubtedly contained the same general information that we find in the other Gospels. Thus it ends with the good news of the resurrection and the beginning of the church. Thus the end is actually a new beginning. It is an ending that doesn’t end.