

# THE REAL JESUS

## A STUDY OF MARK'S GOSPEL

READING GUIDE

A SERMON SERIES

### *As you begin each day:*

1. **Find a quiet place** where you can be alone. This is important for you to more easily focus as you read and have an awareness of God's presence. Prepare yourself to listen.
2. **Read the verses and highlight the main points** that stand out to you. Keep a journal of important things you learn and pray about in this process. Whether you have read the verses before or not, approach them with an eagerness to learn something new about the life and character of Jesus.
3. **Ponder the question(s).** Maybe our question works for you, or maybe you have something else based on the reading that you need to continue to process. Whatever it is, be intentional about thinking and praying about it throughout your day.

## DAILY READINGS WEEK ONE: MARK 1 - 2

### DAY ONE

MARK 1:1-15

John the Baptist was baptizing and preaching repentance. His message caused a great excitement and following, but he made sure that people knew someone even greater and more powerful was coming. Why is it important that this famous baptizer (John) baptized Jesus (v 9-11)? What does it mean to you that Jesus was baptized, tempted (v 12-13) and then began his ministry sharing the good news of God (v 14-15)? How can you identify with the fact that Jesus was tempted in the midst of being obedient?

### DAY TWO

MARK 1:16-28

When Jesus called these men (v 16-20), what did their response look like? Think about HOW they responded, WHAT they left behind, WHAT they may have been thinking/feeling... How has Jesus called you? What has your response looked like? What can you learn from the response of the early disciples? Jesus "taught them as one who had authority" (v 22). According to this passage, what does the authority of Jesus look like and how did it ignite his fame? How do you view the authority of Jesus and how are you spreading His fame?

### DAY THREE

MARK 1:29-45

What stands out most to you about Jesus' character in these verses (his humility, his healing, his need for prayer, his view of people)? Maybe there are some specific words or phrases that stand out most to you? Which of those things would strengthen YOUR character? How could you potentially grow in those areas?

### DAY FOUR

MARK 2:1-17

The paralytic and his friends were desperate to see Jesus. How did their need for Jesus cause them to act? What does that kind of desperation/need look like today? What does it look like for you?

### DAY FIVE

MARK 2:18-28

Jesus was questioned about his DEFIANCE of some "important" rules and traditions... what was Jesus ultimately saying about them through his actions and response? How does Jesus' view of rules and tradition encourage or challenge you as you look at why you do the things you do?

## DAILY READINGS WEEK TWO: MARK 3 - 4

### DAY ONE

MARK 3:1-21

Stubborn hearts hinder our ability to truly see and serve Jesus. We can easily become bound by humanmade rules that can prevent us from doing what is best and fostering life in others. Pure, seeking and humble hearts pursue Jesus, pushing through crowds just to touch him. And ordinary men are who Jesus chose to be in his closest, most intimate group. He appointed and gave authority to simple, regular guys. So where do you fit? Which group of people do you relate to best? What do these verses tell you about Jesus' ministry, leadership and how Jesus is calling and equipping you?

### DAY TWO

MARK 3:22-35

The teachers of the law accused Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebub. What was Jesus' response to the accusation? Why do you think he chose to speak in parables? How might you have responded differently if people were making a similar assumption about you? What does this passage show you about Jesus' character? After this confrontation, Mark talks about a visit from Jesus' mother and brothers. Jesus responds in an odd way after being told of their presence. What does Jesus' response tell you about how he regards those who believe in and follow the will of God? What does it tell you about his regard for you? How does that encourage you or what questions does it raise?

### DAY THREE

MARK 4:1-20

Jesus shared a parable about seed and then went into a little more detail while alone with the disciples. Initially, what do you understand about the seed? What do you think Jesus meant by "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you..." and those on the outside won't understand? Using Jesus' explanation, how would you compare yourself to the seed?

### DAY FOUR

MARK 4:21-34

Here Jesus mentions how silly it would be for one to hide a lamp under a bowl. It would be the same as us turning on a lamp and then covering it with a blanket. What use is the lamp or its light when it is covered? What is blocking your light? What are you concealing that needs to be revealed? Maybe a struggle that needs accountability, a story that needs to be shared, a gift or service that needs to be given? How does the parable about the lamp compare to the parables of the seed?

### DAY FIVE

MARK 4:35-41

The disciples were exactly where Jesus told them to be, and yet a storm came...a storm with waves big enough to overcome the boat and put fear in the disciples (many who were experienced fishermen). What was frustrating to the disciples about Jesus continuing to sleep through the storm? What would you have been feeling? What "storm" have you been through where you questioned God's motives and even His presence? What does this passage tell you about Jesus' power and presence in the midst of storms? What have you learned about God from past experience that has better prepared you for future storms? What can you learn from this passage that may better prepare you for being in the midst of an overwhelming storm?

## DAILY READINGS WEEK THREE: MARK 5 - 6

### DAY ONE

MARK 5:1-20

Jesus again authenticates His ministry through a miracle; this time He shows He has power (and authority) over demons by casting them out of this man. The previously demon-possessed man was so grateful for what Jesus had done for him that he wanted to go with Jesus. But look at Jesus' response in verses 19-20. Jesus had a greater goal in mind. He preferred for the man to stay and display God's greatness by witnessing to others. What has been your response to God's work in your life? When have you desired to do one thing, but Jesus called you to something bigger? What might that look like for you right now? How can you learn from this man's response to Jesus' request?

### DAY TWO

MARK 5:21-34

This woman displays remarkable faith. She was *confidant of Jesus' power*. Faith's significance does not come from the person who has it, but rather who/ what it is in. Who or what do you put your faith in yourself? Your job? Someone close to you? Or in God? How is that faith shown in your life? What are you willing to do to get close to Jesus/grow in your faith? What risks are you willing to take? How does your faith show your confidence of Jesus' power?

### DAY THREE

MARK 5:35-43

The parallels between today's story and yesterday's story are interesting. The woman had been afflicted for 12 years and had faith to be healed, and now the father of a 12-year-old child had faith she could be healed. Both are powerful examples of faith and Jesus' ministry to the hurting. But let's take a different look...re-read verse 40. If Jesus were here today, what would cause you to laugh? Obviously, Jesus said and did some things that could have been called "ridiculous." What "ridiculous" word would you love to hear from God or see happen? What kind of faith do you have in His ability to say/do it? How have you boxed in Jesus with your idea of who He is and what he can do?

### DAY FOUR

MARK 6:1-13

What do you see as the problem with these people (v. 1-6)? Jesus had returned to his hometown... to people who knew Him, His family and had seen Him grow up. The problem with these people is that they were so familiar with Jesus (or so they thought) that it actually hindered their faith. Sometimes we hear stories of Jesus so often (or simply feel we know everything we need to know about Him) that we become bored... and that boredom hinders our faith. How can you keep the proper view of Jesus today and in the future so that your faith can continue growing? What kind of faith do you see in the disciples that they would follow Jesus' calling to "take nothing", go out in pairs and preach and heal with authority? If those ordinary men could leave everything and follow with faith, what may be holding you back?

### DAY FIVE

MARK 6:14-29

How do you think Herod viewed John the Baptist? What is significant about the death of John the Baptist? How/why was Herod swayed into doing something that caused him such distress? What can you learn from Herod? How can you make sure to avoid the same mistake? Why is it important to set up boundaries and prepare for challenging, tempting times in advance? What have you learned from personal experience of times that you neglected to prepare for those times?

## DAILY READINGS WEEK FOUR: MARK 6 - 7

### DAY ONE

MARK 6:30-44

What is most impressive to you about this story? Be sure to take time to find something new. Resist the temptation to view it as you always have if it's very familiar to you. Read one sentence at a time and be intentional about processing what is happening along the way. When you get to a statement that stands out to you, stop to think about it. What image does it give you of the disciples? Of Jesus? How does their example challenge or encourage you?

### DAY TWO

MARK 6:45-56

Verse 45 starts with "Immediately..." What does that mean to you? Why did Jesus send the disciples on ahead? What is significant about this? This is the second time we see Jesus put the disciples on a boat headed for a storm (first example was in Mark 4:35-41). What learning experience have you faced over and over? Why do you think the repetition was/is necessary? When he saw them straining, Jesus went out to the disciples but almost passed them by. Why do you think He might have passed them? The disciples had just witnessed the feeding of the 5000 and now had seen Jesus walk on water (and again the calming of a storm). Yet, "they had not understood...their hearts were hardened." When have you missed the message of Jesus because your heart was hardened?

### DAY THREE

MARK 7:1-13

Here we see another defiance of tradition. Why might the washing have been so important? Why do you think the Pharisees got so upset? What is your response when you see others doing things differently than you have traditionally done/are doing? Re-read verse 7. What does it mean to you? What might you need to re-evaluate or change in order to be sure rules or traditions made by men aren't overshadowing your love and devotion to God? Ask God to show you how you might be worshiping in vain.

### DAY FOUR

MARK 7:14-23

Jesus is referring to clean vs. unclean meats and ceremonial washing (v 1-13 from yesterday). He wanted to point out that purity comes from internal cleanness, not external observances. Read Proverbs 4:23. How might this apply to the verses in Mark? What can you or should you be doing to better guard your heart? How might guarding your heart help protect you from worshiping in vain?

### DAY FIVE

MARK 7:24-37

The woman had heard of Jesus and came begging. What image do you have of her? Her character? Her view of Christ? She was specific and intentional in her request to Jesus, asking for a small amount, a "crumb" of His help. Jesus knew her heart and saw her faith; her request was granted. What can you learn from this woman for how to approach God in your prayer life? After reading about Jesus healing the possessed daughter, we read about Him healing a deaf and mute man. When is a recent time you have seen an amazing thing? I.e. the healing of a friend or family member, safety in a dangerous situation, relational healing. When is the last time something caught your breath and made you sit back in awe? Did you give God the credit? How do these two stories of healing encourage your faith? How might they frustrate you? Take some time to release whatever emotions today's reading brought for you. He can handle it! Challenge yourself to be honest. Take a chance on letting go.

## DAILY READINGS WEEK FIVE: MARK 8 - 9

### DAY ONE

MARK 8:1-10

Can you believe it? ANOTHER feeding of the masses! The crowd had been following Jesus for three days and was now out of food. They could have left in time to get back and eat (knowing they were low on food) but they chose to stay. Now they couldn't make it back without fainting. They were eager to hear what Jesus had to say. Their passion was stronger than their desire for food... their desire to be comfortable. What are you willing to sacrifice to follow Jesus? What is most comfortable that would be the most difficult to give up? What does that look like for you *today*?

### DAY TWO

MARK 8:11-21

The disciples have already seen Jesus miraculously provide food for a crowd... TWICE, but yet again we find them worrying about bread. They lacked faith despite what they had seen. Imagine yourself in their shoes. Would *you* have so easily forgotten Jesus' provision? Why or why not, do you think? If we're honest with ourselves, we have all done it. We fail to make connections with what God has done in the past to what we need to trust Him for today. Take some time to list all the ways He has provided for you in the past and begin to make some connections with how remembering the past can help you trust God today (both with your life and/or the life of someone close to you). Think a little deeper: what did Jesus mean when mentioning the "yeast of the Pharisees"? How does that contribute to Jesus' frustration with the disciples for still not understanding? What does it mean for you?

### DAY THREE

MARK 8:22-9:1

Again, Jesus heals a man in need, showing His disciples and followers His compassionate nature and power. Then He asks the disciples who people say He is. What were some of the ideas? How was Jesus similar to those people? What sets Him apart? Who do YOU say He is? Pray and praise Him for those things. Peter didn't have a big enough perspective. He saw only the brushstrokes of a bigger masterpiece. The strokes seemed rough up close, but if he had stepped back, he might have seen the bigger picture. This is how it is when we see things from our perspective instead of God's. Even though we can't always see the big picture, we can trust that He has our best interest in mind. How can you begin to step back and look for the big picture today? How can you release the things that are still a mystery to trust His big picture even if you can't see the details?

### DAY FOUR

MARK 9:2-13

Verse 7 is the climax of this passage. What do you think is the significance of this moment? What is the significance of what the "voice from the cloud"/God said? Jesus' position as the Son of God seems to call for faith and obedience on the part of the disciples. What implication does that have in your life today? In what areas are you neglecting faith and/or avoiding obedience?

### DAY FIVE

MARK 9:14-29

This is a great scene of Jesus' power in ministry. The disciples were confused as to why they couldn't cast the demon out themselves. Jesus responds, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." Prayerlessness leads to powerlessness. Practice praying today. What steps can you take toward making prayer a part of your regular life?

## DAILY READINGS WEEK SIX: MARK 9 - 10

### DAY ONE

MARK 9:30-50

There are three different sections here. Read each carefully, pick the one that grabs your attention most and use it for your focus today. What do the verses cause you to think about? What picture does it give you of the disciples? Of Jesus? How is it challenging you to make a change? Maybe you need to focus less on yourself and more on the bigger picture God is trying to reveal to you. Maybe you need to be more accepting of those who do things a little differently than you. Maybe you need to change your view of sin to be more in line with how Jesus views it.

### DAY TWO

MARK 10:1-16

Divorce can be a difficult topic. First, as Jesus did in His response to the Pharisees, establish what marriage means to you. Jesus made reference to what is written in Genesis. Read Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:20-24. What picture do these verses give of marriage? What was Jesus' point? Why do you think He decided to point back to God's intentions for marriage when responding to the Pharisees' question about divorce? How does your view of marriage line up with God's intention for a husband and wife? Take some time today to pray for marriages: yours (current or future), the marriages of friends or family, the marriages of your church or community. Pray also about your personal view/definition of marriage.

### DAY THREE

MARK 10:17-31

What was this man asking Jesus? This man knew all the commandments and had kept them since he was a boy. So why was he concerned about eternal life? What did Jesus say was his next step? Why did it turn out to be discouraging for the man? Where are you in your relationship with God today? If you ask God what to do in order to grow in your faith and obedience, what might His response be? What propels you toward or holds you back from taking any next steps of faith? Why? What should you do?

### DAY FOUR

MARK 10:32-45

Jesus predicted His death to the disciples before in 8:31-9:1 and 9:31-32. Why do you think He did it again? What would you have been thinking/feeling if you were one of the disciples? How might this have been difficult for you to understand and accept? What do you think of the boldness of James and John's request in verse 35? What do you think of Jesus' response? How would you have felt if you were one of the other disciples, hearing about this conversation? Again, Jesus reminds the disciples that their focus is off-center. What does Jesus say is most important? How might you need to re-center your focus to be more in line with Jesus?

### DAY FIVE

MARK 10:46-52

What stands out to you from this passage? Bartimaeus knew who Jesus was and called Him by name. When others became annoyed and told him to be quiet, he merely grew louder and more insistent. What does this show you about Bartimaeus' faith? What can you learn from him?

## DAILY READINGS WEEK SEVEN: MARK 11 - 12

### DAY ONE

MARK 11:1-14

During Jesus' triumphal entry the crowd is ecstatic! They love Him. They shout blessings and yell "Hosanna!" Yet, in a few days they will change from adoration to accusation. They will no longer be yelling for his glory, but for his death. How capricious is their faith? Can your faith be fickle at times? Have you praised him one day and then blamed him the next? Think back to an example and why your faith may have wavered. Have you ever said one thing while believing and living another? Why? What steps can you take today toward more constant faith and obedience?

### DAY TWO

MARK 11:15-33

Jesus commands His disciples to have faith. Faith has the power to move mountains! The creator of the universe will answer the honest and humble prayer that is said in faith. Do you believe that? What hesitations do you have? One of the things that can hinder prayer is the refusal to forgive someone. We are commanded to forgive others as we have been forgiven. Who do you need to forgive and truly release from whatever you have been holding against them? Do you realize it stands in the way of your own forgiveness and personal relationship with God? As hard as it may be, forgiving them today is essential to your personal growth. Spend some time in prayer today about forgiveness. Ask God to reveal areas where you need to make changes and that He would give you the strength and courage to do so. Remember, there's power in prayer!

### DAY THREE

MARK 12:1-17

Who do you think the characters in the parable might represent? Do you see who represents God in the parable? Who represents Jesus? The Jews? The prophets? The idea of the parable is that those who reject God will ultimately be rejected. Put yourself in the place of the tenants. How would you have responded? Do you think there are things that God is "renting" to you now? What are they? How do you care for them? What connections can you make to this passage? What do you think Jesus' teaching meant then? What do you think it means now? How does it help to give perspective for how you view your money? God cares about all the details of your life...even taxes. Take some time to pray about how God wants you to view, use and give your money. How can you honor God with your cash? And even in taxes?

### DAY FOUR

MARK 12:18-34

What do you think Jesus is trying to teach in verses 18-27? Why do you think it is meaningful for us to read and understand this principle? What does it cause you to think about? The most important thing you can possibly do is love God with all that you are. List examples of what that could actually look like. How have you seen other people love God with all that they are? How would your life look different if you actually loved God that way? What does it truly mean to love your neighbor as yourself? First, who is your neighbour? How are you loving them? How are you neglecting them? What steps can you take toward loving God more fully and loving your neighbor as yourself? Pray about what you can be doing and begin to make a list of a few simple, attainable goals to help you better live out the greatest commandment.

### DAY FIVE

MARK 12:35-44

God always cares more about the inside than the outside. The Pharisees seem to always have it together, yet Jesus constantly condemns them (because He knows their heart). The widow gave all she had, which wasn't much. What was Jesus' response? He pointed her out, made an example of her...commended her heart. If the emphasis isn't on *what* we give God or even the amount, what is it that God wants? He not only looks at what we give, but also what we are holding back. He also looks at how and why we give. What are you currently giving? Take some time to examine your heart.

## DAILY READINGS WEEK EIGHT: MARK 13 - 14

### DAY ONE

MARK 13:1-23

What do you think Jesus is trying to say to the disciples? They were very impressed with the magnificence of the temple. However, Jesus values very little outward pomp where there is no purity of heart. How have you fallen for what looks good on the outside over what is truly good on the inside? How have you worked harder on your personal image than on your heart? It's a struggle for many of us. Spend some time praying about what you truly value and the state of your heart. What emotions does this passage bring up within you? How does Jesus' attitude/description go with his favour for heart over pomp? He makes some pretty bold statements in this passage. What stands out most for you? What is difficult for you to take in? Why? Jesus was careful to caution against deception. Be awakened to be on your guard. When all around is in disorder, disciples of Christ may enjoy holy security and peace of mind. How can you/do you take heed to not be drawn away from Christ and your duty to Him? What do you think has the potential to do just that? Pray for discernment for today and the days to come.

### DAY TWO

MARK 13:24-37

Close your eyes and imagine what you just read. Really try to picture it. What do you see? How do you feel? How do you picture Jesus in that moment? Is it beyond your imagination? How? What urgency do verses 32-37 stir within you? How are these verses encouraging? How are they challenging? Are you okay with some mystery? Why or why not? Why do you think "that day or hour" is a mystery? What does that mean for you?

### DAY THREE

MARK 14:1-26

The words of verse 9 are penetrating. Why was what this woman did so important? What can you learn from her? What is interesting about the timing of this precious moment to you? What have you been offering Jesus? What are you offering Him today? Taking of the Lord's Supper is a common ritual in churches. How does this story give understanding to the meaning of that ritual? How does reading this passage give depth to your meaning/understanding of the Lord's Supper both then and now?

### DAY FOUR

MARK 14:27-42

Does Peter's response to Jesus surprise you? Why or why not? How can you identify with Peter in this story? Do you think he truly believed in what he was saying to Jesus? Explain. As you read on, how would you describe Peter's behavior? How does it line up with his dialogue with Jesus in the earlier verses? What do you think you would have done if you were Peter in that moment? It's easier to have an idea of what our behavior might be/should be from an outside objective perspective. However, in the moment, it's easy to succumb to temptation. What impresses you most about this passage? What do you find most challenging? How has what you have read going to make an impact in your day? In your week? In your faith?

### DAY FIVE

MARK 14:43-65

Can you picture the scene? Try to imagine what Jesus was thinking...what Judas was thinking/feeling...what the crowd was thinking... what Peter and the others (who were just praying with Jesus in the garden) were thinking/feeling. What do you make of verse 50? As confident as Peter may have been in assuring Jesus he would never leave or disown Him, verse 50 causes us to believe that even he "deserted Jesus and fled". What do you think of Peter's character? How might you have compassion or understanding for his behavior? What do you think about Peter's behavior in verses 53-54? What stands out to you about Jesus' trial? What do you think about Jesus choosing to remain silent and Jesus' chosen response? Verse 64 ends with Jesus being condemned as worthy or deserving of death or guilty of death. What do you think of those phrases? How does this passage change or enhance your view of Jesus and His purpose?

## DAILY READINGS WEEK NINE: MARK 14 - 16

### DAY ONE

MARK 14:66-72

Peter denies Jesus not once, but three times! What started out as one lie quickly compounded to a mess. Peter, feeling guilty, began to become angry. This anger turns to shame when he is found out. Do you, like Peter, ever lose your temper when you are under pressure? How do you deal with being found out when you have lied or tried to cover something up? How do you deal with recognizing failure (or do you simply ignore it)? How can you improve in these areas? What can you learn from Peter?

### DAY TWO

MARK 15:1-20

In the end of this section, we see Jesus being mocked. The guards are spitting on Him and ridiculing Him. Our Saviour, the Creator of the world, was willing to be tried and humiliated and ultimately put to death for you. What does that make you think about? How does it make you feel? What are you willing to go through for Him? His willingness to be humbled for our sake should change the way we live today. What does/should that look in your life?

### DAY THREE

MARK 15:21-47

Take some time to really think about today's reading. Too often we quickly pass through this part of scripture because "we already know the story" or "we've read it many times before." Try to find something new in this story. It was on the cross that Jesus took the punishment for our sin upon Himself. Our job is to not go back to it. Often, when we come to Christ in salvation, we give Him our sin, but soon realize we miss it. We begin to go back to our old ways. God makes it clear that this will never satisfy us. We need to cling to God and not turn back to our old ways. What are you tempted to go back to? What are you tempted to hold on to because it feels safe and comfortable? If you are unsure, take some time to pray Psalm 139:23-24. If/when you find something you need to give up (and leave on the cross), pray about all you have read today. Ask God to give you the strength to move forward, to accept the grace he has lavished on you and live in the mercy of His love.

### DAY FOUR

MARK 16:1-13

The gospel is not good news unless Jesus rises again. 1 Corinthians 15:14 says, "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith." Three verses later in verse 17 Paul says, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." Basically, what Paul is saying is if the resurrection isn't real, then his preaching, as well as his faith, is a waste; it's useless. Paul's life was centered on his faith and preaching, and these both revolved around the resurrection. So, if Christ wasn't raised from the dead, Paul's life was purposeless. The question is... would yours be too? Think about it... If Christ didn't rise from the dead, how much of your life would be wasted? Would it be a couple hours on Sunday morning? A few minutes before meals? 15 minutes in the morning? Whatever time you have spent related to Christ would be a waste if this were the case. How much of your time is that? But, if Christ is alive, then all time spent without Him is a waste. Knowing He is alive, is your life like Paul's, full of things that are Christ centered? Or is it full of things that are futile?

### DAY FIVE

MARK 16:14-20

Jesus comes and gives His final words to His disciples. What He calls them to do is go and make more disciples. 'Teach others what I taught you' is what He is saying. That's the same thing He is calling us to...that He's calling YOU to. How have you been encouraged as you've learned more about the character and life of Jesus and the disciples? How have you been challenged? Who can you come alongside and show what you have been learning as you have studied the book of Mark?