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The Good News Family Devotional



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The Good News Family Devotional

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Contents

Introduction	9
WEEK 1: A New Exodus, Mark 1:1-3	15
WEEK 2: Jesus's Baptism and Temptation, Mark 1:4-13	19
WEEK 3: A New Kingdom, Mark 1:14-22	25
WEEK 4: Rolling Back the Effects of Sin, Mark 1:23-45	31
WEEK 5: Spiritual Needs vs. Physical Needs, Mark 2:1-12	37
WEEK 6: Jesus, Friend of Sinners, Mark 2:13-17	43
WEEK 7: Jesus the Bridegroom, Mark 2:18-22	49
WEEK 8: Lord of the Sabbath, Mark 2:23-28	55
WEEK 9: Legalism vs. Loving Others, Mark 3:1-6	61
WEEK 10: Big Crowds and Inner Circles, Mark 3:7-21	67
WEEK 11: Jesus Faces Religious Opposition, Mark 3:22-30	73
WEEK 12: Family vs. Faith, Mark 3:31-35	79
WEEK 13: The Parable of the Sower, Mark 4:1-20	85
WEEK 14: The Growing Kingdom of God, Mark 4:21-34	91
WEEK 15: In the Storm, Mark 4:35-41	97
WEEK 16: Jesus vs. Legion, Mark 5:1-20	101
WEEK 17: Jesus Fulfills Our Need to Conquer Death, Mark 5:21-24, 35-43	107

WEEK 18: The Power of Persevering Faith, Mark 5:25-34	111
WEEK 19: The Risks of Following Jesus, Mark 6:1-13	115
WEEK 20: The Cost of Following Jesus, Mark 6:14-29	121
WEEK 21: Jesus Feeds 5,000, Mark 6:30-44	127
WEEK 22: Jesus, Strong and Kind, Mark 6:45-56	131
WEEK 23: How Do I Know I'm Not a Pharisee? Mark 7:1-13	137
WEEK 24: The Cure for a Pharisaical Heart, Mark 7:14-23	143
WEEK 25: The Gospel Is for Everyone, Mark 7:24-37	149
WEEK 26: Forgetting Jesus, Mark 8:1-10	155
WEEK 27: The Leaven of the Pharisees, Mark 8:11-26	161
WEEK 28: Life's Most Important Question, Mark 8:27-38	167
WEEK 29: Following Jesus: Spiritual Mountaintops, Mark 9:1-13	173
WEEK 30: Following Jesus: Spiritual Valleys, Mark 9:14-29	179
WEEK 31: Counterintuitive Truths About Following Jesus, Mark 9:30-50	185
WEEK 32: Divorce: A Case Study of God's Law, Mark 10:1-12	191
WEEK 33: Unexpected Reversals in God's Kingdom, Mark 10:13-31	197
WEEK 34: Suffering Before Glory, Mark 10:32-52	203
WEEK 35: The Return of the King, Mark 11:1-11	209
WEEK 36: The Righteous Anger of God, Mark 11:15-19, 27-33	215
WEEK 37: Jesus Curses the Fig Tree, Mark 11:12-14, 20-26	221



WEEK 38: The Parable of the Vineyard, Mark 12:1-12	227
WEEK 39: Three Tests, Mark 12:13-34	233
WEEK 40: Who Deserves Glory? Mark 12:35-44	239
WEEK 41: The Olivet Discourse, Part 1: The Persecution of the Church, Mark 13:1-23	245
WEEK 42: The Olivet Discourse, Part 2: The Second Coming Is Coming! Mark 13:24-37	251
WEEK 43: Jesus's Anointing at Bethany, Mark 14:1-11	255
WEEK 44: The First Lord's Supper, Mark 14:12-25	261
WEEK 45: The Garden of Gethsemane, Mark 14:32-42	265
WEEK 46: Jesus, Betrayed, Mark 14:26-31, 43-50, 66-72	271
WEEK 47: Jesus's Trial, Mark 14:51-65	277
WEEK 48: Human Wickedness Ahead of the Cross, Mark 15:1-15	283
WEEK 49: The Humiliation of Crucifixion, Mark 15:16-32	289
WEEK 50: Jesus Dies and the Curtain Is Torn, Mark 15:33-39	295
WEEK 51: The Burial of Jesus, Mark 15:40-47	301
WEEK 52: The Resurrection, Mark 16:1-8	307
 Appendix: Can We Trust the New Testament?	 313
Notes	317





Introduction

How to Use This Book

As parents, we feel the pressure. There are so many important to-dos on our daily to-do lists. Sometimes the good things we know are important get sidelined because we don't have a plan. We may want to prepare healthy meals, but if we haven't bought the ingredients we need in advance, we find ourselves pulling out the frozen pizza (again) for a quick solution.

One of the most important practices as parents is to teach our children God's Word. Yet, we often feel unprepared and ill-equipped to lead our families. If you're like most parents, you may struggle to find time to read the Bible for yourself, much less the time to instruct and train your children.

That's exactly why we are so excited about this book that you're holding in your hands. We wrote this devotional with both the parent and the child in mind. We want it to be a resource for your own spiritual growth and a help to you as you teach and train your children.

Deuteronomy 6:5-9 instructs us:

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

As we read these verses, it's an important reminder that the first command for us as parents isn't to teach our children. The first command for us is to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and strength and to cherish his Word in our hearts. Then, after we've tasted and seen that the Lord is good, we're

to teach our children diligently: in our homes, along the way, in the morning, and in the evening. When we read and study God's Word for ourselves, we'll be more equipped for these everyday conversations with our children about God's Word. Our love for God will naturally overflow into whatever we are doing as a family.

For this reason, we've arranged this family devotional a little differently than others you may have used in the past. We've broken the Gospel of Mark into 52 weekly segments and provided devotionals for you, as the parent, to read first. Hopefully, as you read the passage and contemplate the truths and explanations in the devotionals, your own understanding of God's Word will grow. You'll feel more equipped to talk about the passage with your family. And as you know God through his Word, you'll love him more.

In addition to the devotional for you as a parent, we've provided helpful tools as you teach your children. For each passage of Mark, we've written an introduction to help you start the conversation with your children. Usually these remind your children about the prior reading and prepare them for what to listen for as they read the passage for the current week. We've also chosen a "Big Idea for the Week." Children learn from repetition, so it's helpful to tell them the Big Idea at the beginning, review it at the end, and reinforce it throughout the week as you reread the passage. For each lesson, we've provided "Questions for Younger Children" and "Questions for Older Children." The questions for younger children are typically more observational, helping them focus on the who, when, and what of the story. Part of biblical literacy is listening well and paying attention to the details of the story. The questions for older children focus more on interpretation, asking probing questions that explore the deeper meaning behind the details. We've also provided a "Family Application Question" to discuss together so that the family can consider how God's Word changes how we live.

Each lesson will close with a review of the "Big Idea for the Week" and a conclusion. In addition, there's a "Family Prayer" to read, as well as a prayer prompt to help your family pray for various people throughout the week. Essentially, for each week you'll have the following:

- Bible Passage to Read
- Parent Reading (that can be shared with older children/teenagers)
- Introduction
- Big Idea for the Week
- Questions for Younger Children
- Questions for Older Children
- Family Application Question
- Conclusion
- Family Prayer

We encourage you to read the passage several days each week with your family. Every time you read, you'll glean a little more. Depending on your schedule, your family may complete the questions all in one sitting or throughout the week. Over the course of the year, your family will study the Gospel of Mark. These weekly conversations will help your family learn God's Word, one verse at a time, one day at a time. You don't need to have all the answers—just the desire to learn alongside your family. The daily faithfulness you provide will be such a rich inheritance for your children, wherever they go.

You may wonder where to fit this into your already full family schedule. Our family spent about ten minutes every morning at the breakfast table reading the Bible and praying for one another. It didn't take long (and we missed days!). Aim for patterns in the home, not perfection. Another time of day may work better for your family, or you may prefer to set a time once a week (perhaps on Sunday) to spend 30 to 45 minutes studying the passage together.

In whatever way you choose to use this book, we encourage you to read the Bible and pray together as a family, as this will bring your family together in beautiful ways. When we look back at our years of raising young children, some of our favorite memories are laughing around the breakfast table as we studied God's Word and prayed for one another. These conversations are daily spiritual food you get to share together. We hope you'll enjoy the feast!

Why Study the Gospel of Mark?

As the title of this book indicates, we will be doing a 52-week study through the Gospel of Mark. Of course, God gave us four Gospels in our biblical canon: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. If you were to do a straw poll in your church about people's favorite Gospel, most would probably pick the Gospel of John. And the reasons are not hard to find. Along with an accessible and flowing style, John contains some of the most famous descriptions of Jesus and his teaching. So why study Mark? Here are a few quick reasons:

Straight to the Point. Of all four Gospels, Mark is the shortest. While the brevity of Mark might be a negative for some, it's actually one of its greatest strengths. Mark has the same skeletal structure of the other Gospels, but its streamlined content allows the reader to get to the point more quickly. Thus, it is beautifully simple (which, by the way, makes it a great Gospel to study as a family!).

Easy to Study. Mark is not only short overall (just 16 chapters), but also the individual stories tend to be tight little nuggets, rather than extended discourses. This allows for a Bible study of more

reasonable length, with each individual lesson covering similarly sized chunks of text. You won't need to do a 5-year Bible study to finish Mark.

Action-Oriented. If Mark were a movie, it would definitely be an action movie. Yes, Jesus delivers profound teaching, but it tends to be in more digestible bite-sized chunks, rather than the long teaching sections found in both Matthew and John. The pace of the story moves along quickly, keeping the reader engaged. Proportionally, therefore, Mark tends to accentuate the remarkable *deeds* of Jesus.

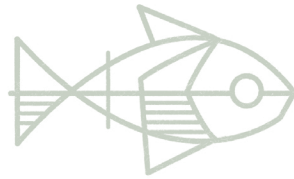
Gentile Focus. While Mark was likely not a Gentile, he is clearly writing for Gentiles—particularly those in a Roman context. Thus, he is eager to make sure the reader understands Jewish customs and the broader OT context in ways that Matthew and John just take for granted. This is a great help for modern readers who are often unaware of these issues. Moreover, Mark's Roman context is quite similar to the context of our modern Western world where Christianity competes in a marketplace of pagan/polytheistic systems. If someone were teaching a Bible study in ancient Rome, they would use Mark.

Unique and Intriguing Details. Since Mark is the shortest Gospel, people often assume his stories include less detail than the other Gospels. But this is one of the paradoxes of Mark's Gospel. Mark is the shortest Gospel because he includes fewer stories overall, but the stories that Mark does include often contain details that appear in no other Gospel. Only Mark tells us the name of the blind man outside of Jericho (Bartimaeus). Only Mark tells us that Simon of Cyrene had sons named Alexander and Rufus. Such unique details make for fun Bible studies.

Connections to Peter. Mark was not an eyewitness to the life of Jesus, but he was an established companion of the apostles in the early church. Also known as John Mark, his name pops up from time to time in Acts and Paul's letters. Since he was a rather obscure figure, this may explain why his Gospel was less popular than some of the others. Wouldn't you rather read from an apostle like Matthew or John? But there are good historical reasons to think that Mark's Gospel was written in the '60s of the first century and is essentially the reminiscences of the apostle Peter. Time and again in our historical sources, we are told that Mark basically got his material from Peter, and that essentially Mark's Gospel is Peter's Gospel. This sheds a whole new light on what you are reading when you read Mark. You're seeing Jesus from the perspective of the preeminent apostle of early Christianity and the one who denied Jesus.

Routinely Underestimated. One of the joys of studying the Bible is taking a closer look at books that people generally underestimate or neglect and discovering why they are more important than we realized. As readers, we move from a posture of shrugging our shoulders to a posture of wide-eyed amazement. That happens with the Gospel of Mark.

So, these are seven wonderful reasons to study the Gospel of Mark. And these features make Mark a particularly good book to study as a family. Enjoy!



A New Exodus

MARK 1:1-3



Parent Reading

When our kids were little, the movie they always wanted to rewatch was *The Prince of Egypt*, a 1990s animated version of the exodus story. It has everything kids love: adventure, action, and excitement, especially at the end, when we see the grand deliverance of God redeeming his people out of Egypt. *The Prince of Egypt* is actually pretty faithful to the biblical narrative, but it misses the same thing many people miss about the exodus story, which is this: The Israelites' freedom from Egypt is about not only Israel's deliverance from physical bondage but also a foreshadowing of the spiritual deliverance still to come.

The account of the first exodus foretells that someday there will be a second exodus led by a true deliverer who will come and save God's people not just from physical bondage but from spiritual bondage as well. And that, of course, is the story of Christ that we'll see laid out in Mark. We should not be surprised, therefore, that Mark begins his Gospel with a citation from the Old Testament about this new and second exodus. This Old Testament quote in Mark 1:2-3, while mainly coming from the prophet Isaiah, also draws upon an important prophecy in the book of Malachi. Let's look at these one at a time.

While Mark 1:2 cites only a small part of Malachi, it's important that we read what Malachi originally wrote: "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple... For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap" (Malachi 3:1-2). A couple of key points stand out from this prophecy. First, we should notice that it is

God himself speaking in Malachi 3:1, declaring that the messenger will prepare the way “before *me*.” Thus, the deliverance described in Malachi will ultimately be accomplished by God himself. God is going to personally visit his people! Second, we should observe what this new deliverance is all about: purification that will be like “a refiner’s fire.” In other words, the second exodus that God promises will be not about physical deliverance but about cleansing from sin.

In Mark 1:3, we see a quote from Isaiah 40:3. This prophecy also promises a new deliverance that will be accomplished by God himself: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” Notice the description of “in the wilderness”—whatever’s going to happen in the future that Isaiah is prophesying about, it’s going to start in the wilderness. Why? Because it’s a second exodus. Just as the first exodus involved Israel being in the wilderness, so this second exodus will begin in the wilderness. And what’s this second exodus about? Isaiah tells us just one verse earlier: “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her...that her iniquity is pardoned” (Isaiah 40:2). Just like Malachi, Isaiah tells us this new deliverance will be about the forgiveness of sins.

This new exodus is picking up where the first exodus left off, and this time our deliverer is someone greater than Moses. This time, the deliverer is God himself. As we read in Mark 1:1, Jesus is God, having come in the flesh. “Son of God” is a title of divinity. To be the Son is to not be a creature. Jesus is not a created being but a divine being. The entire Gospel of Mark is bookended around the concept of Jesus as the Son of God. It opens with this declaration that Jesus is the Son of God, and then at the very end of Mark, when Jesus is crucified, the centurion at the foot of the cross looks up to Jesus and says, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39). Even in the middle of the book, we see this theme appear during Jesus’s transfiguration on the mountaintop when he is called “my beloved Son” by God himself (9:7).

Over the course of this 52-week journey through Mark, we’ll see how Jesus reveals himself to be God and, more than that, a God who brings deliverance. But as we begin, here’s what we want you to realize about the book of Mark: This entire Gospel is about God answering the question of how human sin can be forgiven. Just as God used Moses to deliver his people from the physical bondage of slavery, he uses Jesus to deliver his people again from the spiritual bondage of sin. Just as Jesus is greater than Moses, the deliverance of the new exodus is greater than the deliverance of the first exodus. The most important thing isn’t the physical deliverance from slavery that was accomplished in the Old Testament but the spiritual deliverance from the eternal death that is the cost of sin. What matters is eternity, and Mark is laying the foundation for it. And that’s a pretty good way to start a new exodus.



Family Devotion

Introduction

Tell your family, “I’m excited that we’re going to start reading the Gospel of Mark together as a family! The passage we are reading today tells one of the ways God prepared Israel for the coming of Jesus. It’s just a few verses, so listen carefully, and then I’ll ask you some questions. Let’s learn the big idea for the week, and then we’ll read together.”

► *Big Idea for the Week*

The story of Jesus is a story of deliverance: It’s a new exodus!

► *Read*

Mark 1:1-3

If you have older children, you may share with them some or all of the Parent Reading material from the beginning of this week’s devotion.

► *Questions for Younger Children*

1. According to verse 1, who is Jesus?
2. What does verse 2 tell us about Isaiah? What is he called? (For younger children, it might be good to show them the book of Isaiah in the Bible and explain that the prophet Isaiah wrote these words many years before Jesus was born.)
3. Where was the person crying out from?

► *Questions for Older Children*

1. Why do you think God sent a messenger to prepare the people for Jesus? Why do we send invitations for important events today?
2. Why do you think he was in the wilderness? Can you think of any Old Testament story where people were wandering in the wilderness for many years? Who delivered them?

3. The word *gospel* means “good news.” So, Mark 1:1 is basically saying, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Why is the story of Jesus good news? How did Jesus deliver his people?
4. Why is it significant that Jesus is called the “Son of God”? (See Parent Reading.)

► **Family Application Question**

What are some ways we can prepare our hearts and minds to learn from God’s Word each day?

► **Review the Big Idea for the Week**

The story of Jesus is a story of deliverance: It’s a new exodus!

Conclusion

In your own words, remind your family about Moses and the first exodus story. Explain that Mark’s Gospel is setting up a second exodus story, and this time Jesus is the deliverer of his people. While Moses set them free from slavery to the Egyptians, Jesus sets us free from slavery to sin.



Family Prayer

After completing the Family Devotion together, read out loud the prayer below.

Dear Lord, *we pray that you would prepare our hearts to learn about Jesus as we study the Gospel of Mark. Help us to understand your Word and to live in joyful obedience to your commands. Thank you for sending Jesus to be our deliverer. In Jesus’s name, amen.*

For each day this week, have a different family member pray for the two people below.

Family member to pray for today: _____

Church member or friend who needs our prayers today: _____

Jesus's Baptism and Temptation

MARK 1:4-13



Parent Reading

Last week, we talked about how Mark tells the story of the new exodus. This week, we'll look at the two unexpected things Jesus does to kick off this new exodus: He gets baptized, and he gets tempted. You may be wondering how these actions are relevant for starting this discussion about the forgiveness of sins. But we're going to discover why these two things are absolutely essential if Jesus is going to be our savior.

Let's start with the baptism, where John the Baptist appears for the first time in Mark. It's clear that he is the "messenger" promised in both Malachi and Isaiah who will prepare the way for the Lord. Here's an interesting fact about John the Baptist: He's one of the few people in the New Testament whose physical appearance is described, and that's because the description of him—camel hair clothing and a leather belt (Mark 1:6)—almost exactly mirrors the description of the prophet Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8. In Matthew's account of this baptism, Jesus comes to get baptized, and John the Baptist pauses and basically says, "Wait, shouldn't this be reversed? Shouldn't *you* be baptizing *me*?" (3:14). You might have this same question: If baptism signifies the cleansing of sins, and Jesus is sinless, why does he need to be baptized?

Though Mark doesn't give too many details about the baptism, in Matthew's account, we read that Jesus responds by saying, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). One thing you may not know that explains his response is that baptism is basically a sign of judgment and death. It symbolizes the cleansing of sins, yes, but it also symbolizes God's judgment—baptism

puts us under God's "flood" (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). Essentially, baptism is a picture of dying and coming out on the other side with new life (Romans 6:3). By submitting to baptism, Jesus is putting himself under God's judgment not because he's a sinner—he isn't—but because he *represents* us. What do we deserve as sinners? God's wrath and God's judgment. What is Jesus doing by being baptized? He's taking our place. He's essentially saying, "You should be judged for your sins, but I'm being judged in your place." This baptism is an anticipation of the entire Gospel of Mark: Jesus taking on the wrath of God in our place.

Jesus not only takes on the punishment we deserve but also performs the obedience we cannot, something that's equally important but often overlooked. This happens when he is tempted by Satan for 40 days in the wilderness. Notice that Jesus is driven to the wilderness (Mark 1:12). We talked about the significance of the wilderness in the exodus and new exodus stories last week, and here we see it appear again. The wilderness is where Israel failed, and where they wandered for 40 years. So, Jesus facing 40 days of temptation in the wilderness has a huge symbolic significance—in a sense, he's reenacting the exodus. And unlike the complaining and grumbling Israelites, Jesus demonstrates perfect obedience. Where Israel failed, Jesus succeeds.

Mark doesn't go into the details of what these 40 days were like, and we can only imagine what a one-on-one battle between Satan and the Son of God must have been like. If you haven't thought about how significant the scope of this battle must have been, just think about it for a moment. Satan, the arch enemy of God, facing off against the divine Son of God come to earth. One might have expected lightning and thunder, an entire cosmic battle. And in the end, Mark doesn't directly tell us who won! The reader is left on the edge of their seat. But soon we discover who won when Christ exits the wilderness, steps up to the microphone, and declares, "The kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15).

Jesus is able to announce the good news of the coming of the kingdom of God, precisely because he has defeated Satan in the wilderness by his perfect obedience. Do you realize that in all of human history, Satan has never failed, not even once, to get a human being to sin? Up to this point, Satan was undefeated. He had never lost. But now, with the coming of Jesus, Satan has finally lost for the first and only time. Jesus is the only human (and he was a real human!) in history to withstand the temptation of Satan.

Here's what we want you to grasp about this: When Jesus obeys—not only in the wilderness but throughout his entire life—he's obeying for you and for me. He not only dies in our place but also obeys in our place. Why would he do that? Because his obedience means that his righteous status as the perfect, obedient Son can be given to you and me by faith. One of the amazing things about how

the Bible presents salvation is that salvation isn't just about having your sins forgiven but about having righteousness you didn't earn attributed to you by faith. When you believe in Jesus, not only is the debt of your sin paid, but also the status of Jesus's righteousness is given to you.

So, here is where we understand why Jesus was *both* baptized and tempted. His baptism was a picture of the punishment of death that he would pay for us. His temptation demonstrated his perfect righteousness, which he earned for us. And that is why the Gospel of Mark is about "good news."



Family Devotion

Introduction

Tell your family, "Last week we talked about God's messenger who would come to prepare the way for Jesus. This week, as we study Mark, we'll learn *who* that person was and how he prepared the way for Jesus. Let's learn the big idea for the week, and then we'll read together."

► *Big Idea for the Week*

Jesus obeyed perfectly so we could become children of God.

► *Read*

Mark 1:4-13

If you have older children, you may share with them some or all of the Parent Reading material from the beginning of this week's devotion.

► *Questions for Younger Children*

1. Who appeared in the wilderness? What did he wear and eat?
2. What three things happened when Jesus was baptized?
3. Where was Jesus tempted for 40 days? Do you remember how long the Israelites wandered in the wilderness?

Questions for Older Children

1. Last week, we talked about the messenger that God would send to prepare the way of the Lord. In what ways did John prepare the people for Jesus? What did he teach about Jesus?
2. When we take a shower, we are cleansed physically. In baptism, we are cleansed spiritually. Why do we need spiritual cleansing? Why is it important to confess our sins?
3. If Jesus never sinned and came to rescue us from our sins, why did he need to be baptized? (See Parent Reading.) Why is it so important that Jesus withstood the temptations of Satan in the wilderness?
4. What contrasts and comparisons do you see between this story and the story of Moses and the Israelites? What is different about the second exodus that Jesus is leading?

Family Application Question

When we sin, what are some of the reasons we want to hide what we've done? What is the right thing to do when we do something wrong or hurt someone? In what ways can we apologize better as a family when we make mistakes? How can we do a better job of extending forgiveness and grace to one another?

Review the Big Idea for the Week

Jesus obeyed perfectly so we could become children of God.

Conclusion

In your own words, remind your family that Romans 3:23 teaches us, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Every person (even parents!) struggles with sin and needs forgiveness. However, the good news that we see in Jesus's baptism and temptation is that Jesus has overcome sin. He withstood temptation and walked in perfect obedience to God. His blood paid our debt and cleanses us, just as water makes us clean. At Jesus's baptism, God said, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). When we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus, we become beloved children of God, with whom he is well pleased.



Family Prayer

After completing the Family Devotion together, read out loud the prayer below.

Dear Lord, *we confess that we struggle to do the right thing and walk in obedience to your ways. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we ask you to help us walk in a manner worthy of the gospel, that we may glorify you in all that we say and do. Thank you for Jesus's perfect obedience and that because of him, we are your beloved children. In Jesus's name, amen.*

For each day this week, have a different family member pray for the two people below.

Family member to pray for today: _____

Church pastor or leader to pray for today: _____

A New Kingdom

MARK 1:14-22



Parent Reading

After facing the temptations of Satan in the wilderness, Jesus enters the region of Galilee and declares, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). *The kingdom of God is at hand.* Jesus is bringing a new exodus. And if you have a new exodus, guess what else you need? A new Israel. How do you create this new “nation”? And what do you do to belong to it? Mark gives the answer: “Repent and believe in the gospel” (verse 15). Your new identity is given to you by *faith*.

This would have been shocking to the average Israelite. Even though Israelites in the Old Testament were also saved by faith (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3), not all understood this. Some would have thought they were in good standing with God simply by virtue of their birth. If a person was a descendant of Abraham and physically born into the nation of Israel, they might have assumed that was all that was needed (John 8:39). But now, Jesus is saying that what defines belonging to the kingdom of God isn’t whether you were born into it but whether you have faith in him.

The Gospel of Mark makes clear that the forgiveness of sins is received by faith in Jesus. You don’t get it because you grew up in the right family or because you think you’re a good person. You get it by believing, turning away from your sin, and trusting in Christ. We might meet people today who think that Christianity can be defined by heritage. For example, there are many Americans who grew up in the South and consider themselves to be Christians simply because of their background. They grew up in the “Bible Belt.” They went to church with their grandparents. They were even baptized. Yet Jesus is pushing back against this notion of salvation, saying that you cannot become part of God’s kingdom simply by being born into it.

We see also that this new “Israel” is not composed of who we might expect. Instead of the wealthy and educated aristocracy, he chooses the marginalized and socially outcast. In verses 16-20, we learn that the very first disciples he calls were fishermen. We might be so used to the story of the Gospels that we think, *Yeah, of course his disciples were fishermen. What’s the big deal?* But to put this into perspective, there were social elites even in the ancient world, and fishermen were not among them. Galilee was not the place where you’d go if your goal was to start a kingdom filled with high achievers and success stories. This region was made up mostly of what we’d describe today as “blue-collar” people; it was considered to be backwater, uneducated, and lower class. In modern terms, this would be the equivalent of Jesus recruiting from a truck stop, and I think that’s a pretty good comparison. He’s breaking any stereotypes of his time that would have existed about who should belong to a strong and successful kingdom, because this kingdom would be defined not by worldly merits but by internal faith. This fits with something Jesus will say later in the book of Mark: “Many who are first will be last, and the last first” (10:31).

We can take great encouragement from the way Jesus picks his first disciples. It shows us that God can use anyone to build his kingdom—even if they look weak and inconsequential in the eyes of the world. Indeed, we might say that God delights in using the weak things to build his kingdom because “God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong” (1 Corinthians 1:27). And why does God do this? So that in the end he gets all the glory.

After Jesus calls his first few disciples and begins his public ministry, we see that the first thing he does is preach (verse 21). Proclaiming God’s Word was fundamental to his mission. Part of this is because preaching marks him as the Messiah. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus cites the book of Isaiah about his own messianic mission: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18, citing Isaiah 61:1). But he also preaches God’s Word because it is the foundation of the new kingdom he is ushering in. Preaching God’s Word is the most significant aspect of Jesus’s ministry, even more so than his healings (which we’ll discuss next week), because the Christian life is about having a relationship with God, and that relationship begins by hearing an invitation from him. It begins by hearing and responding to the gospel message.

But Jesus’s preaching was not like any preaching the Israelites had heard before. Notice verse 22: “They were astonished at his teaching, for *he taught them as one who had authority*, and not as the scribes.” Unlike the other rabbis, when Jesus teaches God’s Word, he doesn’t depend on human authority; he just depends on his own authority. And Jesus is the only person in human history who has had the right to speak this way. In this moment, the people watching him preach were confronted with the

awe-inspiring and profound authority of God, and they understood, even before they knew Jesus's identity, that something was different here. Something new was coming. The kingdom of God was truly at hand.



Family Devotion

Introduction

Ask your family, “Do you remember a time when you really wanted to be chosen for something? Maybe a sports team or a class play? Or maybe to lead the recess line at school? In this week’s passage from Mark, we’re going to read a story about the very first disciples and how they responded when Jesus called them to follow him. Let’s learn the big idea for the week, and then we’ll read together.”

► *Big Idea for the Week*

Jesus is worth leaving everything to follow!

► *Read*

Mark 1:14-22

If you have older children, you may share with them some or all of the Parent Reading material from the beginning of this week’s devotion.

► *Questions for Younger Children*

1. In Mark 1:15, what two actions did Jesus tell people to take?
2. What type of job did Simon, Andrew, James, and John have?
3. What did Jesus promise would happen if they followed him?

► *Questions for Older Children*

1. How did Simon, Andrew, James, and John respond to Jesus?

2. What do you think it means to be a fisher of men?
3. What does the word *repent* mean? What does it mean to believe the gospel?
4. Are you surprised by whom Jesus picked as his first disciples? What type of people might you expect him to pick?
5. Why were people astonished at the teaching of Jesus?

Family Application Question

When they heard the call to follow Jesus, the disciples immediately did two things:

1. They left their nets.
2. They followed Jesus.

In many ways their actions are a visual picture of Jesus's call to "repent and believe." They had to stop what they were doing so they could actively follow Jesus. (Now, there wasn't anything wrong with being fishermen, but sometimes we need to stop doing even good things so we can prioritize the best thing!) Is there anything you need to stop doing so that you can follow Jesus in new ways? Is there anything as a family we should stop doing so that we can prioritize Bible reading, prayer, and church?

Review the Big Idea for the Week

Jesus is worth leaving everything to follow!

Conclusion

Share with your family how you started following Jesus and explain the difference it has made in your life. In your own words, explain how the call to follow Jesus is available to anyone. Spend some time memorizing Mark 1:15 together: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."