

MARK

Session 1

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Jesus is unlike any other savior, and he calls us to make him our first priority.

Head Change: To understand that Jesus Christ is holy, unlike any other.

Heart Change: To feel fascinated with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Life Change: To actively make Jesus Christ the priority of our lives.

OPEN

Jesus is a well-known figure, even to non-believers. But people have widely varying opinions about him.



1. **How would you describe him? What makes Jesus unique?**

Whether you've had a relationship with Jesus for a long time, are a new follower of his, or are still wondering about who Jesus is, one goal of this study is that everyone would walk away with a greater appreciation of who Jesus is and how a relationship with him will dramatically alter your life.

READ



2. **Read Mark 1:1–13.**

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Francis Chan's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Francis answers the following questions:



3. **In what ways is the good news that John the Baptist was preaching different from the usual way we use the phrase "good news"?**
4. **What sort of attitude should we have toward Jesus?**

Show Session 1: Mark 1:1–13 (6 minutes)

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DISCUSS

Mark opens by setting the stage for Jesus. The word he uses is “gospel.” Most of us have heard the term a thousand times. But Mark here means he’s about to tell the story of a victor. And in these first few verses, we get the origin story for this man who will save the world.

Francis Chan started off the video by wading into the waters of the Jordan River and remembering the baptism of Jesus. John the Baptist had been baptizing people who were repenting of their sin, telling them about the one who was to come. John understood exactly who Jesus was. He went so far as to tell the people he was not worthy to untie his sandals (1:7).



5. Why do you think John felt unworthy to untie Jesus’s sandals? What does that say about John?
6. Describe your attitude toward your sin. Does it evoke as strong a reaction as John’s? Why or why not?

Francis asked us if we truly grasped the immensity of the Incarnation. He tried to imagine what it must have felt like for John the Baptist to stand in front of his Creator. Think about your own Christian life.

7. In what ways has Jesus become too familiar? Do you find yourself taking him for granted? How?
8. Read Mark 1:9–11.

In these three sentences, Mark mentions the three persons of the Trinity in action together.

9. What is each one doing? How are they working in unison?

Francis also emphasized the uniqueness of the gospel, the good news from God on a completely different level from what we often describe as good.

10. In what way did he describe the good news?
11. Reading this opening passage, what do you expect from Jesus? What kinds of things do you anticipate from him as Mark’s Gospel goes forward?

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12. Read Mark 1:12–13.

After being baptized, Jesus departed from John. The text says that “the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.” So he went, and there he experienced forty days of hunger and temptation. Mark doesn’t give a lot of details.

13. What do you think Mark wanted to communicate with this short summary of Jesus’s experience in the wilderness?

(Jesus’s temptation helped prepare him for the work God had for him to do.)

14. Looking back at your life, do you see evidence of God using challenging times to prepare you for something he had for you to do in the future? If so, share that with the group.

Mark opens his gospel with a dramatic picture that depicts Jesus as the Son of God. C. S. Lewis once famously wrote that we must not fall into the trap of merely considering Jesus to be a good moral teacher:

Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse... You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. (*Mere Christianity*, p. 56)

15. Who is Jesus to you? Have you decided to trust that he is indeed the Son of God? If not, what is holding you back?

16. If you do believe Jesus is God, what kind of savior has he been in your life? How are you living daily with that reality?

LAST WORD

The Gospel of Mark examines Jesus’s claim to be the Son of God. As we work through this study, we will see much more evidence to bolster Jesus’s claim. Once Mark establishes Jesus as the Son of God, he then asks us how we plan to respond to that truth.



17. Will you keep your ears open and willing to hear? And if you already believe, what will you do with his teachings?

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GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.

1. Background

When it comes to studying any book of the Bible, it's good to start with some background. Let's take a brief look at the historical context and purpose behind the Gospel of Mark.

Author

Of the four gospels, Mark is easily the shortest. It's also anonymous. The gospel itself does not specifically name "Mark" as its author, but the bulk of church history since the second century has affirmed it as so. Most likely, the same John Mark who traveled with Paul during his missionary journeys wrote this gospel.

For more information about John Mark, see Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 14:51–52; 15:37–39; Col. 4:10; Phlm. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:13.

Purpose

Writing from Rome in the first century, Mark penned his gospel following two major themes: First, a thorough look at Jesus and, second, the true nature of discipleship. Since it was written to a largely Gentile (non-Jewish) audience, Mark went out of his way to explain Jewish customs and described Jesus as both the Jewish Messiah ("Son of David") and Savior of the Gentiles. Even more, he emphasized the suffering and death of Jesus as the means by which we enter into a right relationship with God by faith. And the path of Jesus is the path we follow in true discipleship. Mark wrote to Gentiles. John the Baptist spoke to Jews. Both wanted people to understand that Jesus was the most important person anyone could ever meet.

18. How does your faith background influence the way you see Jesus? Are you aware of potential blind spots, beliefs, or practices that you may have missed out on growing up in a certain tradition? How have you grown to know Jesus more holistically?

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2. Peek at the Greek: euangelion

Despite being the shortest of the four gospels, Mark uses the term euangelion (“gospel”) more than all of the others combined. It appears seven times (1:1, 14, 15, 8:35, 10:29, 13:10, 14:9) compared to Matthew’s four. Neither Luke nor John uses the word in their accounts. Clearly,

Mark intends to emphasize the “gospel” of Jesus to his readers. Rather than being simply a recycled philosophy or set of doctrines, this good news was unique—revolutionary even—and sourced in the Son of God made flesh. Mark’s emphasis to his readers is true for us today—the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, provides the hope we long for.

- 19. Can you communicate the gospel message clearly? Write out the basic truths one must know and believe as a follower of Christ.**

3. Peek at the Greek: ekballo

In verse 12, Mark says that the Spirit “drove” Jesus into the wilderness. He uses the term ekballo, which means, “force to leave.” The word appears fifteen other times throughout Mark’s gospel, most often in cases of exorcism where a demon is expelled. However, the idea here is not that Jesus was forced into the wilderness against his will, but rather he went as a result of divine mandate, as with the other uses of the term in Mark. In other words, Jesus went in obedience to the Father.

Way back in Genesis, in the beginning of the Bible, God makes a man and a woman and asks them to obey him. The Creator-God promises them everything: life, happiness, power, friendship, and rulership over all the earth. They just have to trust and obey. But they didn’t. *Re-read Mark 1:11–13. Then, if you don’t remember the story of Adam and Eve’s failure, read Genesis 3:1–15 too.*

- 20. What mandates from God were ignored or disobeyed in the Genesis passage? What resulted from their rebellious behavior?**

Jesus obeyed the directive of his Father out of love and trust. Too often we fail to obey God due to our selfishness and fear. We can’t seem to truly believe that his way is the best way, that he will strengthen us for the task he’s set before us. So, we refuse his direction and end up losing out on the blessing he had planned for us.

- 21. Take time to reflect on your ability to discern God’s leading. Consider why you may be choosing to delay obeying.**

Spend a couple of minutes in prayer, asking God to teach you more about Jesus as the Son of God through studying the Gospel of Mark.