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Mark: *Discover Jesus*

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
GETTING STARTED	
How to Use this Discussion Guide	7
What Is a Q Place?	8
Q Place Guidelines	8
Q Place Discussion Tips	9
Tools for Studying the Bible in a Q Place	9
When You Are the Question-Asker	10
MARK: Discover Jesus	
Introduction	11
1. Mark 1	
Jesus' Early Ministry	13
2. Mark 2:1—3:6	
Popularity and Controversy	21
3. Mark 3:7-35	
Recognized and Misunderstood	27
4. Mark 4:1-34	
Teaching with Stories	33
5. Mark 4:35—5:43	
Handling Crisis Situations	41
6. Mark 6	
Jesus' Fame Spreads	47
7. Mark 7	
Tradition versus God's Commands	53
8. Mark 8:1—9:1	
"Who Do You Say I Am?"	61

9. Mark 1—8	
Review	67
10. Mark 9:2-50	
Belief and Unbelief	71
11. Mark 10	
Questions for the Teacher	77
12. Mark 11	
Entering Jerusalem	83
13. Mark 12	
Debating in the Temple Courts	89
14. Mark 13	
Things to Come	95
15. Mark 14:1-52	
The Final Night	101
16. Mark 14:53—15:15	
The Two Trials	107
17. Mark 15:16-47	
Crucifixion and Burial	113
18. Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24	
“He Has Risen!”	119
Conclusion	125
Map	127

FOREWORD

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

This simple question is recorded in chapter 8 of Mark. Jesus asked his disciples this question nearly two and a half years after they had been following him. He had just asked them a different question: “Who do people say I am?” They had heard other people’s opinions of Jesus. Some thought he was John the Baptist. Others said he was Elijah or another ancient prophet. But there came a day when Jesus wanted to know what they personally would say about his identity. Before this day came, Jesus gave them plenty of time to gather facts and make observations. He asked his followers and critics many good questions that led to dialogue and increased understanding. He performed miracles of healing, provided food for thousands, calmed a storm on the sea, and walked on water.

Ultimately, the disciples were able to respond to Jesus with an answer that was carefully contemplated through their own personal experience and not just what other people said about him. Most likely you have also heard about Jesus and who others say that he is. Now you are invited, like the early followers of Jesus, to discover for yourself who Jesus is through the study of Mark, the shortest and simplest gospel story of Jesus.

This discussion guide is a tool to help you discover the life and teachings of Jesus Christ with other people who are curious about him. It is filled with questions and will support your group’s search for the facts, meaning, and personal application of each passage in the book of Mark. The guide was developed by Neighborhood Bible Studies, which began in 1960 and now continues as Q Place.

Q Places are facilitated through great questions and a set of guidelines that promote respect, community, and safety for people of all backgrounds and beliefs to discuss the Bible together. Check out the Q Place Guidelines and Discussion Tips on pages 8 and 9, and follow them so that everyone will be able to learn from each other in your group.

Here's what Q Place is all about ...

Q Places are small groups of people who meet to discuss questions about life, God, and the Bible. Spiritual doubts, words of the Bible, and God are all part of the dialogue in a Q Place. You can find one in a neighborhood, coffee shop, or any place where people come together in community. It is where you will come to know others just like you, who are seeking answers to life's deepest questions. In a Q Place, people genuinely care more about who you are, than what you might believe. You are accepted. Respected. You can be yourself, because that's exactly what everyone else is doing.

A Q Place is not for experts. It's for new discoveries. We like to say, "If you think you are an expert, resist the urge to teach. Instead, try to listen and ask questions so that everyone can discover answers for themselves," just as the early followers of Jesus did. If you are interested in starting a Q Place yourself, please read our book *How to Start a Q Place* to learn our method and ministry principles.

Some people come to a Q Place to discuss some of the toughest questions about God in our *Tough Questions* series. Others begin discussing short sections of the Bible using a Q Place Bible Conversations Card. When a group is interested in exploring an entire book of the Bible, we believe the book of Mark is the best place to begin reading the number one best seller of all time. We are grateful for Marilyn Kunz and Catherine Schell, the founders of Neighborhood Bible Studies and the authors of this excellent study guide. They authored many more of Q Place's study guides that are filled with conversation-generating questions. Regardless of the curriculum path you've chosen, we hope that you will benefit greatly from our method, materials, and ministry in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

– Q Place Publishing Team

MARK

Discover Jesus

Introduction

Would you like to have heard the apostle Peter tell about his experiences with Jesus? Read the Gospel According to Mark! Written about 65 A.D., the Gospel of Mark is the earliest record we have of the life of Jesus. It contains Peter's eyewitness account, which Mark recorded from Peter's preaching and teaching.

We know about the author, John Mark, from brief mentions in the book of Acts, the letters of Paul and Peter, and from what is probably his personal signature in Mark 14:51-52. Mark accompanied his relative Barnabas and the apostle Paul on the first missionary journey, but deserted the trip before it ended. Paul refused to take Mark on his second journey, but spoke highly of him later (2 Timothy 4:11), indicating Mark's stature as a Christian leader in later years. Peter called him *my son Mark* (1 Peter 5:13). The Christians in Jerusalem used the house of Mark's mother, Mary, as their headquarters.

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four records of the life of Jesus. Its vivid realism presents Jesus as fully divine and fully human. Mark devoted six out of sixteen chapters to the last week in Jesus' life, indicating the importance of these particular events. Mark wrote for the Gentile Roman mind, presenting Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. A careful examination of the record requires a definite response to the facts presented. William Barclay, a Scottish theologian, writer, and teacher, comments that Mark's Gospel could be called the most important book in the world.

1

Mark 1

Jesus' Early Ministry

During the events of Mark's account, Roman legions are keeping the peace in an empire that extends from Britain in the west to Persia in the east. John the Baptist and Jesus begin their ministries in Galilee and along the Jordan River, unnoticed by Tiberius Caesar in Rome and his governors in Palestine.

Verse 1 can be read as the title for the whole book of Mark. **Messiah** is a Hebrew word that is translated **Christ** in Greek. It is a title that means "anointed one."

Read Mark 1:1-8

1. Mark quotes an Old Testament prophecy about a messenger who will come from God. Where will the messenger work?

What is his task?

What is his message?

2. In what ways does John the Baptist fulfill the Old Testament prophecy about the messenger?

Note: To the Jews, John's dress signified he was a prophet like the Old Testament prophet Elijah. His food was that of the poor.

3. In what ways would John's ministry prepare the people for the Messiah?

How does repentance prepare us to receive a Savior?

Read Mark 1:9-15

4. Locate Galilee, Nazareth, Jerusalem, and the Jordan River on the map on page 127. Notice that Jesus walks more than 60 miles to be baptized by John. What are the unique events at Jesus' baptism?

How are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit represented here?

5. Imagine verses 12 and 13 as a large painting. What facts about the temptation does Mark emphasize by the setting, and who and what he includes?

6. After his temptation, Jesus begins to preach the good news of God in Galilee. What does this suggest about the outcome of his temptation?

7. What similarities and what differences do you see between Jesus' preaching (verse 15) and John's (verses 4, 7-8)?

Read Mark 1:16-20

8. From what class of society does Jesus call his first disciples?

Why do you think he does not call religious leaders, scribes, and priests?

9. How does Jesus change the focus of the work of Simon and Andrew?

What indications are there that James and John are perhaps younger and financially better off than Simon and Andrew?

10. What comments might the families or neighbors have made when these four followed Jesus?

What reactions would there be today?

Read Mark 1:21-28

11. In the synagogue at Capernaum, what impresses the people about Jesus' teaching (verses 22, 27)?
12. How does the unclean spirit address and identify Jesus?

What pronoun does the spirit use in referring to himself?

What does he fear?

13. How do Jesus' two commands make it clear that he regards the unclean spirit as a separate entity from the man it is possessing?

Note: Do not spend a lot of time at this point discussing evil spirits. Mark will mention them several times in his book and you will learn more as you study further.

Read Mark 1:29-34

14. How do the four disciples react to the crisis they find in the home of Simon and Andrew?

15. What events of this Sabbath day stimulate the crowd's activity at sundown?

Note: The Jewish Sabbath ends at sundown.

16. Once again Jesus refuses to let demons speak (verses 25, 34). What reasons do you think he has for this action?

Read Mark 1:35-39

17. On the Sabbath day Jesus taught in the synagogue, cast out the evil spirit, healed Simon's mother-in-law, and after sunset healed the sick and cast out many demons from the people the crowd brought. After such a day when, where, and why does Jesus pray?

18. Why are Simon and the disciples looking for Jesus?

How is this a temptation for Jesus?

19. Why does Jesus set the priorities on his ministry of preaching and healing as he does?

Locate on your map the places where Jesus preaches in his early ministry.

Read Mark 1:40-45

20. The reader might conclude from verse 38 that Jesus does not care about people's physical needs, but in verse 40, Mark records Jesus' response to a man with leprosy. What question does the man have?

What would it mean to this man to have Jesus touch him rather than just speak to him?

21. How does the man's disobedience to Jesus' strict order interfere with Jesus' plan?

*Note: The term **leprosy** included some other skin diseases as well as leprosy itself. Under Jewish law anyone who recovered from such a skin disease had to be examined by a priest and go through a ceremony of restoration (Leviticus 14). After receiving a certificate that he was clean, he could return to live in society.*

SUMMARY

1. How does Mark begin to prove his thesis that Jesus is ***the Messiah, the Son of God?***
2. What indications are there that Jesus is also truly human?
3. What impressions do you get of Jesus thus far?

CONCLUSION

Mark begins his record of the life of Jesus Christ with Jesus' public ministry rather than with his birth as Matthew and Luke do. Mark links Jesus to the Old Testament prophecies of Messiah by including the purpose and effect of John the Baptist's ministry. He begins to reveal who Jesus is by describing Jesus' baptism, temptation, and early preaching and healing ministry in Galilee.