

I. Introduction

A. How well do you know me?

\*What if you were asked significant questions about Jesus? Would it appear that you really know Him or not?

B. Why we need Jesus

1. Decisions and actions matter
  - a. Election
  - b. Injustice, lawlessness, and civilization
  - c. Human value vs sin
  - d. Exercising rights, that which is permissible vs beneficial
2. We are reborn to reflect Jesus Christ.
  - a. In order to be successful, we have to know Jesus.
  - b. Could you answer questions about Jesus? What would He say to your answers?

\*Today, as much as ever, we need to intimately know Jesus. We can't just know facts about Him, we need to be deeply dependent on Him in a way that He and His character rules our thinking, our speech, our behavior, and our desires. We were reborn to reflect.

\*This is why we are going through the book of Mark!

II. Prologue: a small glimpse, set in the story of humanity, with a clear separation from the start of this story. It exists to give us information that we couldn't know otherwise.

\*Mark 1:1-13 is written to give us solid footing on who Jesus is and why he's important!

A. Witnesses

1. Mark (v 1)
2. Old Testament prophets, specifically Malachi and Isaiah (vs 2-3)
3. John the Baptist (v 7)
4. The Godhead, Father and Spirit (vs 10-11)
5. The Satan (v 13)

B. Context: wilderness

1. In the text: vs 3, 4, 12-13 (Old Testament prophets, John, Jesus)

\*We talk about wilderness as a negative experience, but I think we might be a little off on that.

2. Wilderness, in biblical symbolism, is a place of hope and a place of new beginnings.
  - a. Moses (Ex 3), Israel out of Egypt, where Israel experienced God's protection and provision
  - b. The wilderness is not the main stage of Jesus' ministry, but it is the place that our eschatological hope is born.

"Christian hope is not about wishing things will get better. It is not about hoping that emptiness will go away, meaning return, and life will be stripped of its uncertainties, aches, and anxieties. Nor does it have anything to do with techniques for improving fallen human life, be those therapeutic, spiritual, or even religious. Hope has to do with the knowledge of "the age to come." This

redemption is already penetrating “this age.” The sin, death, and meaninglessness of the one age are being transformed by the righteousness, life, and meaning of the other. What has emptied out life, what has scarred and blackened it, is being displaced by what is rejuvenating and transforming it. More than that, hope is hope because it knows it has become part of a realm, a kingdom, that endures. It knows that evil is doomed, that it will be banished.” -David Wells (Gordon-Conwell and TEDS)

3. Our connection/experience to the wilderness
  - a. Innate in humans that we seek out meaning, purpose, rest, restoration, balance in the wilderness - Go Outside!
  - b. We can also find in the wilderness of our lives danger, disappointment, disruption, and doubt, but nowhere else can we experience God’s provision and protection more fully.

\*We are in a wilderness now and our nature is to see it as something to get out of. Might God intend for us to see this as an opportunity for a new beginning (to correct what’s wrong with us) rather than to get back to what we got used to?

C. Access: baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (v 4)

1. Baptism: ritual washings common in Old Testament and Judaism
  - a. John was calling for a single, initiating baptism indicating the beginning of a new commitment.
  - b. Similar to the ritual cleansing by immersion of a Gentile proselytizing!

\*But John’s baptism was for Jews! To be born a Jew was not enough to be counted in the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is not an ethnic Kingdom!

2. Repentance

- a. Reorientation to the paradoxical values of the kingdom of God
- b. Discipleship is simply a lifetime of repentance!

\*We must willingly enter into a baptism of repentance to be counted among the people of God.

D. Emissary: Jesus Christ

1. Baptism

- a. Public or private?
  - 1) Matthew = Jesus focused, between God and Himself only
  - 2) Luke = less specific, but no mention of a reaction from John or the crowd (Paul’s conversion)
  - 3) John = John the Baptist bears witness to the visible dove. (John 1:31-33)

\*It appears that Jesus’ baptism was a public demonstration but a private revelation. We get a heavenly or supernatural glimpse of what is going on (see Job 1-2)

b. Threefold revelation of Jesus as the Messiah

- 1) Heavens torn open (supernatural truth about to be declared)
- 2) Descent of the Spirit (marks Jesus as anointed one to bring the Good News and confirms His divine power and presence in His mission)
- 3) Voice of God (commissions Him to undertake His God-given role and identifies Him as Son of God)

2. Testing

- a. Entire episode is directed by the Holy Spirit
  - 1) Testing (temptation) in a positive light overseen by the Holy Spirit
  - 2) Satan is both absolutely hostile toward God and yet operating, despite himself, within God's overall sovereignty.
- b. The players
  - 1) Satan: know also from other accounts his approach and desire to provoke Jesus to sin
  - 2) Wild animals (beasts)
    - a) Careless look, assume the animals were at peace and prophecy about the wolves and lambs in Isaiah fulfilled... unlikely
    - b) Remember godly and beastly rule?
    - c) Wild beasts were held at bay and we see the kingdoms of humankind represented as contentious.
  - 3) Angels: caring for and protecting Jesus (see Daniel and the lions)

\*Jesus is identified and approved as Messiah to the spiritual realm and rulers behind the rulers of this world.

### III. Implications

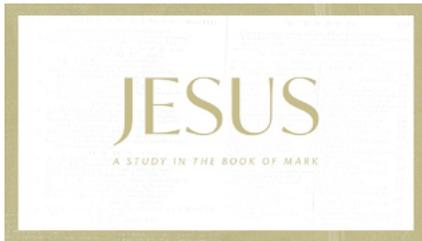
#### A. Wilderness

- 1. Do I see my wilderness as an opportunity to begin again with God in a new and deeper way?
- 2. My experience and how I see differently now.

#### B. God's sovereignty

- 1. Satan is both absolutely hostile toward God and yet operating, despite himself, within God's overall sovereignty.
- 2. How does this truth apply to my circumstances?

\*Because the supernatural realm knows exactly Who Jesus is, we must recognize that there is a spiritual backdrop to everything that happens and must live and contest for the faith and the souls of humanity.



## PROLOGUE

MARK 1:1-13

SEPTEMBER 27, 2020 | PASTOR MATT WHITEFORD



### GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT AS YOU START YOUR CONVERSATION)

- 1 We all have a variety of highlights and memories from our elementary school years. Who was your favorite or craziest teacher in elementary school?**
- 2 Have you ever spent time in the wilderness? If so, what led you there? If not, what are some reasons you might avoid the wilderness?**

We are starting a new series in the Gospel of Mark we are calling “Jesus.” We begin by seeing how John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus to begin His public ministry. Can you imagine what it would have been like to be there on the day when John was proclaiming that the Messiah was on His way, only to see Jesus walking down the road to be baptized? What about being there when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness? This is the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Let’s dig in together and see how we can apply the truths we see in this passage.

### QUICK REVIEW (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY’S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week’s message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

### DIG DEEPER (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY’S MESSAGE)

- 1 Someone read Mark 1:1-8.**

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way, <sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight,’” <sup>4</sup>John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>And he preached, saying, “After me comes He Who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

**If you were to move into a new community and could have someone do one thing to “prepare the way,” what would you have them do?**

**What is significant about John the Baptist in the story of Jesus? How do you believe he fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy (vs. 2-3)?**

When a royal figure was planning to pass through a town, a messenger would be sent ahead of the royal entourage so that the towns along the way could get things ready for his coming, literally straightening and smoothing the roads. In this context, making straight paths for the Lord implies repentance from sin (1:15).

John's ministry of baptism had a special meaning in this particular river which had an important place in Israel's history. After the exodus from Egypt, it was the miraculous crossing of this river that brought the people of Israel into the land God had promised them (Joshua 3). John's ministry in the Jordan was a call for the people to once again come into the wilderness and cross over the river in order to experience the fulfillment of God's promise regarding the Messiah.

## 2 Someone read **Mark 1:9-13**.

<sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from Heaven, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased."

<sup>12</sup> The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> And He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And He was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to Him.

**What purpose do you see in Jesus' baptism and temptation? What significance do these events have in preparing Jesus for His public ministry?**

**Simply being tempted isn't a failure on our part. Wouldn't it be great if we could just snap our fingers and have temptation disappear? Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. Look over the following verses and identify some strategies that help us avoid and overcome temptation.**

- Psalm 119:9-11
- 1 Corinthians 10:12
- James 4:7-8
- Philippians 4:8
- Hebrews 10:24-25

**Can you think of any examples of how one the verses above has helped you avoid falling into temptation in your own life?**

**When it comes to resisting temptation and sin, does anything come to mind that you have learned (maybe even the hard way)?**

## **LIVE IT OUT** (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

1

**The whole Gospel could be summed up in this point: that when the living God looks at every believing Christian, He says to us what He said to Jesus on the day He was baptized. He sees us, not as we are in ourselves, but as we are in Jesus. God looks at us and says, "You are My dear, dear child; I'm delighted with you." What would it mean to you to hear God say that to you?**

2

Within the context of Satan testing Jesus in the wilderness, Matt stated that "Satan is both absolutely hostile toward God and yet operating, despite himself, within God's overall sovereignty." **How does this truth apply to your current circumstances and any "testing" or temptations you face?**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Close your time in prayer with your group.

## NEXT WEEK: "Jesus" week 2

Read **MARK 1:14-34** before Sunday and your home group. Remember to take good notes so you are ready to add to the discussion your home group will have!

## PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

## TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of being in a Home Group. Here are some tips to help make group prayer be a life-giving aspect of your group.

**PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME:** Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request or praise during the prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next request or praise.

**PRAY MORE THAN ONCE:** If your group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one should be required to pray.

**KEEP PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE:** Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one should be required to pray out loud.

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### How to Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and living like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content during your group discussion or to hit on all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!

Visit [cpmodesto.org/groupleaders](http://cpmodesto.org/groupleaders) to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit [cpmodesto.org/homegroups](http://cpmodesto.org/homegroups) and use the Home Group Finder!

**MARK 1:1-13**

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**1:1** Mark's Gospel starts at the beginning (Greek: arché) of the Gospel (Greek: euangelion, meaning "good news"). The name Jesus is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament name Joshua, meaning "Yahweh is salvation." Jesus is identified as Christ or Messiah and Son of God. Jesus is often identified as God's Son in Mark: at His baptism (v. 11), by demons (3:11; 5:7), the transfiguration (9:7), His trial (14:61), and the centurion's confession (15:39).

**1:2-3** "As it is written" is a formulaic expression indicating the authoritative character of the Old Testament (7:6; 9:13; 11:17; 14:21,27). The phrase "in Isaiah the prophet" introduces a mixed quotation from Exodus 23:20; Isaiah 40:3; and Malachi 3:10. Hence some manuscripts read "in the prophets." In its original context, "Lord" refers to Yahweh. The messenger announces the coming of God Himself. The Gospel writers applied the words to Jesus, Who is God in flesh (John 1:14).

**1:4** Mark does not mention John's birth (Luke 1) but instead introduces him as baptizing in the wilderness, a place that recalled Israel's disobedience (Joshua 5:6) and God's redemption. John called for a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. "Repentance" means "to change one's mind." It involves a deliberate turn from sins.

**1:5** That John attracted the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem indicates his appeal among both country folk and urbanites.

**1:6** John's dress was like Elijah's (2 Kings 1:8) and other prophets (Zechariah 13:4). Mark's description suggests that John was the Elijah who was expected to return and call the nation to repent before the day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5-6).

**1:7-8** John announced that the coming One was more powerful and that he was not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of His sandals—a task for Gentile slaves. The coming One was also superior in His work: He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:16). John's baptism was symbolic; Jesus' baptism would introduce the reality. Only here and in Mark 3:29 and 13:11 does Mark mention the Holy Spirit.

**1:9-11** Nazareth is mentioned only here in Mark (cp. 6:1). Three things occurred as soon as Jesus came up out of the water. The heavens were torn open, the Spirit descended, and God's voice came from Heaven. "As soon as" or "immediately" (Greek: euthus) occurs over 40 times in Mark. "My beloved Son" indicates the Son's uniqueness and recalls Abraham's love for Isaac (Genesis 22:2,12,16). Only Israel (Exodus 4:23) and Israel's king (Psalm 2:7) were called God's son in the Old Testament. The divine declaration in Mark 1:11 announced Jesus' eternal relationship to God. All three persons of the Trinity were represented at Jesus' baptism.

**1:12-13** The same Spirit Who descended on Jesus at His baptism now drove Him into the wilderness. "Drove" is a strong term used for the driving out of demons (vv. 34,39; 3:15,22,23; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18,28,38) and other forced expulsions (5:40; 9:47; 12:8). "In the wilderness 40 days" recalls Israel's testing for 40 years as well as Moses' (Deuteronomy 9:18) and Elijah's (1 Kings 19:8) 40-day wilderness fasts. "The angels began to serve Him" is in the imperfect tense. This may indicate that they ministered to Jesus in unstated ways throughout His temptation, though He was not fed until the end (Matthew 4:11). Angels also ministered to Elijah during his 40-day wilderness fast (1 Kings 19:1-8).