

GROUP GUIDE TO

On the move with Jesus in Mark (chapters 1-4)

(Based on the commentary available from www.friends-first.com in 'Free Resources' and in 'Explore the Bible')

THE BIBLE IN OUR GROUPS

- A Christian cannot happily live without the Bible anymore than a person could happily live without air, food, water, heat or direction. That's why it's important that Christians - *preferably on a daily basis* - learn to breathe its oxygen, feed on its nourishment, drink its refreshment, absorb its energy, and obey its instruction.
- The very first thing that the first church devoted themselves to in their gathering was "the apostle's teaching" (see Acts 2:42) which is now recorded for us in the Bible. That's why God's Word is so central in our gatherings, both our large Sunday ones, and in our small groups.
- Getting into God's Word *together* helps us get even deeper into God's Word, and it helps the Word get deeper into us. Someone said, "It doesn't matter how much of the Bible you go through, what really matters is how much of the Bible goes through you." That's why we explore the Bible *alone and together*. What's more, exploring the Bible together greatly motivates us all to explore the Bible alone.
- The average weekly small group gathering consists of three main components: 1) Bonding time (where we get into each other's lives); 2) The prayer encounter (where we get into God's presence); and 3) Life-shaping conversation (where we get into God's Word). This guide impacts the life-shaping conversation part of the gathering.
- In your group devote four weeks to Mark, chapters 1-4. Everyone in the group is to read a chapter (usually), with the commentary as an aid, as preparation and come ready to have a "life-shaping conversation" based on it in the group.

OUTLINE

Week Before

- The small group leader needs to:
 - Make sure everyone has an electronic or printed out copy of the Mark commentary, called “On the move with Jesus in Mark”.
 - Motivate everyone to read through chapter 1 of Mark in their daily devotions during the week.
 - Explain that they don’t need to read all of the commentary, but that it will help them when they come across those verses that either don’t make sense, or they don’t know how to apply to their lives.
 - Encouragingly instruct them to try come ready to share: 1) What major insight into the Bible (from Mark 1) you discovered; 2) What one or two things you believe God said to you through it; and 3) How what he said impacts your life. (*Be warned, chapter 1 is arguably the most insight-packed of all the chapters of Mark*).
 - Assure everyone that even if they don’t do this reading, they should still come, because they will get much out of the time next week. (This is why it’s also suitable to keep inviting new people to the group).

Week One

- **Ice-breaker question:** (*Note to leader: an ice-breaker is meant to be brief, to get the ball rolling, to not necessarily be spiritual and to help people get to know each other*) “In Mark 1:35-39 we see Jesus shaking off the loud demands of people and doing what he knew he was meant to do. Have you ever experienced the same thing in your life?”
- Slowly read through the main points from the commentary of Mark 1 (listed below) as a reminder, and as an opportunity for new people to participate if they want. Also read all or part of Mark 1.
- **Discovering Bible insights:** “Of all you read in Mark this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?”
- **Discerning God’s message:** “As you pondered Mark this week, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?”
- **Responding to God’s message:** “In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?”
- Remind people: “This week, please read Mark 2:1-22 in your daily devotions. Next week, try come ready to share: 1) What major insight into the Bible you discovered; 2) What one or two things you believe God said to you through it; and 3) How what he said impacts your life.

JESUS PREPARES FOR MINISTRY (1:1-9)

- A new day dawned on this planet when Jesus arrived.
- God woke the world up to the anticipation of the soon-to-come Messiah.

- Jesus desires to plunge you into the Spirit's presence and power.
- Jesus' water baptism carries at least three meanings for your life.
- You desperately need to be filled with the Spirit.
- At his baptism, God anointed and announced Jesus to be the promised Messiah-king.
- God allows you to go through difficult and tempting times as a way of preparing you for ministry.

GOD IS DOING SOMETHING NEW! (1:14-15)

- Be open to God guiding you through both the Spirit *and* through circumstances.
- God is doing something new, and it's just so wonderful!
- God is doing something new, and he's doing it through Jesus.
- God is doing something new, but it will only be completed in the future.
- God is doing something new, and you're urgently invited to get in on it.

FOLLOWING JESUS (1:16-20)

- Following Jesus begins when Jesus calls you personally.
- Following Jesus means you define yourself as his disciple.
- Following Jesus means you're learning how to live in and demonstrate the kingdom of God.
- Following Jesus usually [comes at a cost.] results with some kind of cost.
- Following Jesus is embracing Christ's call to adventure and mission.
- Following Jesus is a journey of discovery.

THE KINGDOM COMES (1:21-45)

- Jesus seeks to train you to live in and advance God's kingdom.
- The kingdom comes in authoritative teaching.
- The kingdom comes in authority over the realm of evil spirits.
- The kingdom comes in the healing of the sick.
- The kingdom comes through your prayerful dependence on the Spirit.
- The kingdom comes as you put God's whispered leadings above the thundering demands of people.
- The kingdom seems to come in waves of varying intensity.
- The kingdom can experience setbacks through your disobedience.

Week Two

- **Ice-breaker question:** "In Mark 2:16 we see that Jesus enjoyed socializing with all kinds of people, even immoral and irreligious ones. Are there any kinds of people that you really don't enjoy being with? And why is this?"
- Slowly read through the main points from the commentary of Mark 2:1-22 (listed below) as a reminder, and as an opportunity for new people to participate if they want. Also read all or part of Mark 2:1-22.
- **Discovering Bible insights:** "Of all you read in Mark this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?"
- **Discerning God's message:** "As you pondered Mark this week, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you?"

specifically?”

- **Responding to God’s message:** “In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?”
- Remind people: “This week, please read 2:23 to the end of chapter 3 in your daily devotions. Next week, try come ready to share: 1) What major insight into the Bible you discovered; 2) What one or two things you believe God said to you through it; and 3) How what he said impacts your life.

JESUS FORGIVES AND HEALS A PARALYZED MAN (2:1-12)

- Approach Jesus with faith and determination.
- Team together with others in bringing people to Christ.
- Repent of a critical spirit.
- Be ready to discern (with the help of the Spirit) the heart-attitudes of people.
- Christ is ready to forgive your sins.

BECOMING A FRIEND OF NON-RELIGIOUS PEOPLE (2:13-17)

- Don’t think any kind of person is beyond Christ’s reach.
- Help new believers to maximise their opportunity to reach out.
- Graciously socialize with all kinds of people.

THE NEW THING THAT CHRIST’S DOING (2:18-22)

- Christ’s kingdom is a party.
- Fasting should be at appropriate times and should be future-focused.
- New moves of God call for new ways of thinking, living and community-structuring.

Week Three

- **Ice-breaker question:** “Jesus in 3:34 implied that the more pressure a community of people come under, the closer they can all become. Have you ever experienced this in your relationships?”
- Slowly read through the main points from the commentary of Mark 2:23-3:35 (listed below) as a reminder, and as an opportunity for new people to participate if they want. Also read all or part of Mark 2:23-3:35 from the Bible.
- **Discovering Bible insights:** “Of all you read in Mark this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?”
- **Discerning God’s message:** “As you pondered Mark this week, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?”
- **Responding to God’s message:** “In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?”
- Remind people: “This week, please read chapter 4 in your daily devotions. Next week, try come ready to share: 1) What major insight into the Bible you discovered; 2) What one or two things you believe God

said to you through it; and 3) How what he said impacts your life.

CHRIST'S LIBERATING LEADERSHIP (2:23-3:6)

- Jesus sometimes claimed in coded ways to be the Messiah-king.
- Institutions and laws are meant to benefit not repress people and society.
- In Christ's kingdom, you're released from the Sabbath (and from the rest of the law of Moses, for that matter).
- Embrace a spirituality that is life-giving and liberating, not life-sapping and legalistic.
- Religion can be a really ugly thing.
- As you advance the kingdom of light, you can expect a reaction from the kingdom of darkness.

RAISING LEADERS, SETTING PEOPLE FREE AND STARTING A NEW FAMILY (3:7-35)

- If you're a leader in Christ's kingdom, then multiply yourself by identifying and training up other leaders.
- Jesus uses his authority over Satan to set people free from Satan's power.
- Rejecting Christ means that you remain unforgiven.
- The closer you get to Christ, the closer you get to fellow believers.
- The more the church is persecuted, the more intense the sense of family becomes.

Week Four

- **Ice-breaker question:** "Jesus used creative methods in his teaching. Who is the most exciting teacher you've ever had, and what was it about them and their teaching style that really grabbed you?"
- Slowly read through the main points from the commentary of Mark 4 as a reminder (listed below), and as an opportunity for new people to participate if they want. Also read all or part of Mark 4 from the Bible.
- **Discovering Bible insights:** "Of all you read in Mark this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?"
- **Discerning God's message:** "As you pondered Mark this week, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?"
- **Responding to God's message:** "In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?"
- "Well done for listening to God in Mark 1-4. We'll continue going through Mark on _____. While you wait, there are 65 other books waiting for us, so don't stop reading through them in your own devotions. Keep expecting God to speak to you through his Word. Also be sure to make use of the **other** commentaries available on www.friends-first.com."

THE KINGDOM COMES DEPENDING ON OUR RESPONSIVENESS (4:1-25)

- If you're a teacher, more often use some of Jesus' teaching methods.
- Your responsiveness (or lack of it) determines how much Jesus is willing to reveal himself and his kingdom to you.
- The way you respond to what Jesus is saying to you determines how much your life will be impacted by him.
- It's spiritual blindness (and not God's unwillingness to reveal Christ) that explains why so many people have failed to see the light of Christ.
- The measure of your responsiveness determines God's measure of revelation to you.

THE KINGDOM COMES BECAUSE GOD SOVEREIGNLY WILLS IT (4:26-34)

- Christ's kingdom supernaturally results in spiritual growth in your life.
- Christ's kingdom will ultimately become the greatest reality of history.
- Jesus' message was too explosive to go fully public with too soon.

WHEN STORMS COME (4:35-41)

- Trust Christ when the storms of life come.
- Christ is master of the universe.

Colour-code summary: the four main ways God speaks to us through the Gospels...

Blue = something about Jesus' uniqueness and Lordship that shows he is worthy of our devotion, trust and surrender

Green = something about Jesus' character or ministry that we can imitate

Red = something Jesus taught that we can understand or apply to our lives

Orange = insights we can apply based on the way various people responded to him