



MARK

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Dane C. Ortlund



J. I. Packer

THEOLOGICAL EDITOR

Dane C. Ortlund

SERIES EDITOR

“This series is a tremendous resource for those wanting to study and teach the Bible with an understanding of how the gospel is woven throughout Scripture. Here are gospel-minded pastors and scholars doing gospel business from all the Scriptures. This is a biblical and theological feast preparing God’s people to apply the entire Bible to all of life with heart and mind wholly committed to Christ’s priorities.”

BRYAN CHAPPELL, Chancellor, Covenant Theological Seminary

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GRAEME L. GOLDSWORTHY, former lecturer, Moore Theological College; author, *According to Plan, Gospel and Kingdom, The Gospel in Revelation, and Gospel and Wisdom*

K N O W I N G T H E B I B L E

J. I. Packer, Theological Editor
Dane C. Ortlund, Series Editor
Lane T. Dennis, Executive Editor

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Genesis
Isaiah
Mark
John
Romans
James

• • • • • •

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Dane C. Ortlund

Knowing the Bible: Mark, a 12-Week Study

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S E R I E S P R E F A C E

KNOWING THE BIBLE, as the series title indicates, was created to help readers know and understand the meaning, the message, and the God of the Bible. Each volume in the series consists of 12 units that progressively take the reader through a clear, concise study of that book of the Bible. In this way, any given volume can fruitfully be used in a 12-week format either in group study, such as in a church-based context, or in individual study. Of course, these 12 studies could be completed in fewer or more than 12 weeks, as convenient, depending on the context in which they are used.

Each study unit gives an overview of the text at hand before digging into it with a series of questions for reflection or discussion. The unit then concludes by highlighting the gospel of grace in each passage (“Gospel Glimpses”), identifying whole-Bible themes that occur in the passage (“Whole-Bible Connections”), and pinpointing Christian doctrines that are affirmed in the passage (“Theological Soundings”).

The final component to each unit is a section for reflecting on personal and practical implications from the passage at hand. The layout provides space for recording responses to the questions proposed, and we think readers need to do this to get the full benefit of the exercise. The series also includes definitions of key words. These definitions are indicated by a note number in the text and are found at the end of each chapter.

Lastly, to help understand the Bible in this deeper way, we urge readers to use the ESV Bible and the *ESV Study Bible*, which are available in various print and digital formats, including online editions at www.esvbible.org. The *Knowing the Bible* series is also available online. Additional 12-week studies covering each book of the Bible will be added as they become available.

May the Lord greatly bless your study as you seek to know him through knowing his Word.

J. I. Packer
Lane T. Dennis

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW



Getting Acquainted

The Gospel of Mark plays a unique and strategic role in the Christian Bible. In this account of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, we see him fulfilling in himself the Old Testament hopes for a coming king, the Messiah,¹ yet we also see the stark ways in which Jesus confounds public expectations of what this king will do: he will suffer. Mark's Gospel also gives us a vivid portrayal of what authentic discipleship² looks like for those who follow a rejected king.

Of the four Gospels, Mark was probably the first one written. It is the shortest and also the fastest-paced Gospel account. For example, Mark repeatedly transitions to a new section of his narrative with the word “immediately.” While Matthew and Luke share quite a bit of material with Mark, Matthew and Luke contain large blocks of behavioral teaching by Jesus that Mark does not include. This absence gives Mark a feel of heightened intensity as events rapidly hurtle toward the final week of Jesus' earthly life.

Mark's Gospel is concerned with presenting Jesus as the Messiah, the king, the Son of David, who is rejected by the religious authorities and calls his followers to radical discipleship in the kingdom of God.³ (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 1889–1892; also online at www.esvbible.org.)

Placing It in the Larger Story

While Matthew focuses on Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, Luke describes Jesus as the one who welcomes the outsider, and John emphasizes Jesus as the eternal Son of God, Mark focuses on Jesus as the one who ushers in the kingdom of God. Through his life and teaching, but especially through his death and resurrection, Jesus fulfills all the Old Testament hopes and promises, bringing in the long expected new age.

Key Verse

“Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’” (Mark 1:14–15)

Date and Historical Background

Mark wrote his account of Jesus in perhaps the mid- to late-50s AD. He probably relied heavily on the eyewitness account of the apostle Peter. Though written in Rome, Mark’s Gospel was aimed at the wider church, especially those who had not been raised as Jews, as is evident from the way Mark at times explains Jewish customs.

Mark wrote roughly 25 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. At the time of writing, Nero was emperor in Rome, Paul was in the midst of his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:16), and Jerusalem was about ten years away from being besieged by the Romans under the leadership of Vespasian and his son Titus (66–70 AD.).

Outline

- I. Introduction (1:1–15)
- II. Demonstration of Jesus’ Authority in Ministry (1:16–8:26)
 - A. Jesus’ early Galilean ministry (1:16–3:12)
 - B. Jesus’ later Galilean ministry (3:13–6:6)
 1. Calling of the Twelve (3:13–35)
 2. Parables (4:1–34)
 3. Nature miracle, exorcism, and healing (4:35–5:43)
 4. Rejection at Nazareth (6:1–6)

C. Work beyond Galilee (6:7–8:26)

1. Sending of the Twelve (6:7–13)
2. Death of John the Baptist (6:14–56)
3. Teachings on moral defilement (7:1–23)
4. Opening the door of grace to Gentiles (7:24–30)
5. Additional miracles in Decapolis and Bethsaida (7:31–8:26)

III. Demonstration of Jesus' Authority in Suffering (8:27–16:8)

A. Journey to Jerusalem (8:27–10:52)

1. Peter's confession (8:27–33)
2. Call to discipleship (8:34–9:1)
3. Transfiguration and healing (9:2–29)
4. Instruction on discipleship: putting others first (9:30–50)
5. Instruction on discipleship: divorce, wealth, humility (10:1–52)

B. Entering and judging Jerusalem (11:1–13:37)

1. Triumphal entry into Jerusalem (11:1–11)
2. Jesus' judgment on religious leaders (11:12–12:44)
3. Jesus and the coming universal judgment (13:1–37)

C. Death and resurrection in Jerusalem (14:1–16:8)

1. Betrayal (14:1–52)
2. Trial (14:53–15:20)
3. Crucifixion and resurrection (15:21–16:8)
4. ["Longer ending of Mark" (16:9–20; see note)]

As You Get Started . . .

What is your general understanding of the role of Mark's Gospel related to the other three Gospels? Do you have any sense of what Mark uniquely contributes?

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

How do you understand Mark's contribution to Christian theology? From your current knowledge of Mark, what does this account of the life of Jesus teach us about God, humanity, sin, redemption, and other doctrines?

What has perplexed you about Mark's Gospel? Are there any confusing parts to this Gospel that you hope to resolve as you begin this study of Mark?

As You Finish This Unit . . .

Take a moment now to ask for the Lord's blessing and help as you engage in this study of Mark. And take a moment also to look back through this unit of study, to reflect on a few key things that the Lord may be teaching you—and perhaps to highlight or underline these to review again in the future.

Definitions

¹ **Messiah** – Transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning “anointed one,” the equivalent of the Greek word *Christ*. “Anointed one” signified kingship. The Messiah therefore came to mean the anticipated coming king who would liberate Israel once and for all and bring in the kingdom of God. Jesus affirmed that he was the Messiah sent from God (Matt. 16:16–17).

² **Discipleship** – Submitting to the teachings of another and following that person's way of life. In the NT, disciples were those who submitted themselves to the teaching of Jesus, especially the twelve men who traveled and lived with Jesus during his earthly ministry.

³ **Kingdom of God** – The rule of God manifested in the long-awaited restoration of his people and indeed the whole world, in which God would reign under the glad submission of all people. When Jesus came two thousand years ago, he announced that the kingdom of God had arrived (Mark 1:15; Luke 17:20–21). Yet because of ongoing rebellion and rejection of Jesus and his rule, the kingdom still awaits its final consummation and fulfillment in Jesus' second coming (Mark 14:25). For this reason we pray for the kingdom to come (Matt. 6:10).



THE GOSPEL OF MARK paints an important portrait of Jesus as Israel's promised Messiah. Mark's account also makes clear how Jesus' kingship confounds public expectations by emphasizing his humility, suffering, and sacrifice.

This accessible guide is filled with wise reflections on the biblical text and helps us understand what vibrant faith and authentic discipleship look like as we follow a rejected king.

ABOUT THE *KNOWING THE BIBLE* SERIES

Over the course of 12 weeks, each study in this series explores a book of the Bible and:

- Asks thoughtful questions to spur discussion
- Shows how each passage unveils the gospel
- Ties the text in with the whole story of Scripture
- Illuminates the doctrines taught in each passage
- Invites you to discover practical implications
- Helps you better understand and apply God's Word

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BIBLE STUDY