

- Song 130 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **"Your Sins Are Forgiven":** (10 min.)
[Play the video *Introduction to Mark*.]
Mr 2:3-5—Jesus compassionately forgave the sins of a paralytic (jy 67 ¶3-5)
Mr 2:6-12—Jesus proved that he has authority to forgive sins by healing the paralytic (nwtsty study note on Mr 2:9)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
Mr 1:11—What is the meaning of Jehovah's words to Jesus? (nwtsty study notes)

Mr 2:27, 28—Why did Jesus call himself "Lord . . . of the Sabbath"? (nwtsty study note)

What has this week's Bible reading taught you about Jehovah?

What other spiritual gems have you discovered in this week's Bible reading?

- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) Mr 1:1-15

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Begin with the sample conversation. Respond to an objection that is common in your territory.
- **First Return Visit:** (3 min. or less) Use the sample conversation.
- **Second Return Visit Video:** (5 min.) Play and discuss the video.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 44
- **"I Came to Call, Not Righteous People, But Sinners":** (7 min.) Discussion. Play the video *From Prison to Prosperity* (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES). Then ask the following questions: How did Donald get his life back? As we preach, how can we imitate Jesus' impartial treatment of people? —Mr 2:17.
- **Jehovah Forgives "in a Large Way":** (8 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Jehovah, I'm Going to Put You First* (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES). Then ask the following questions: How and why did Anneliese return to Jehovah? (Isa 55:6, 7) How can you use her experience to help those who have drifted away from Jehovah?
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) jy chap. 17
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 86 and Prayer


MARK 1-2 | "Your Sins Are Forgiven"



2:5-12

What do we learn from this miracle?

- Sickness is linked to inherited sin
- Jesus has the authority to forgive sins and the power to heal sick people
- Under the Kingdom, Jesus will remove imperfection and sickness forever

 How can Mark 2:5-12 help me to endure when I am sick?



1. Lovingly Jehovah

Made provision through his Son
For our sins to be forgiven
And for death to be undone.
If we truly are repentant,
His forgiveness we can claim
On the basis of Christ's ransom,
Asking pardon in his name.

2. We receive such mercy

When we act like God above
And forgive each other freely,
Showing empathy and love.
Putting up with one another,
Putting hurtfulness away;
Showing honor to our brother,
Showing love's surpassing way.

3. Mercy is a virtue

That we all should cultivate.
It will keep us from resentment,
From the bitterness of hate.
When we imitate Jehovah,
Who is unsurpassed in love,
We will truly be forgiving;
We will be like God above.

ACCORDING TO **MARK**

1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God: **2** Just as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "(Look! I am sending my messenger ahead of you,* who will prepare your way.)"^a **3** A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of Jehovah!* Make his roads straight.'"^b

4 John the Baptizer was in the wilderness, preaching baptism in symbol of repentance for forgiveness of sins.^a **5** And all the territory of Ju-de'a and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him, and they were baptized* by him in the Jordan River, openly confessing their sins.^b **6** Now John wore clothing of camel's hair and a

1:5 *Or "dipped; immersed."

MARK 1:7-34

leather belt around his waist,^a and he ate locusts and wild honey.^b **7** And he was preaching: "Someone stronger than I am is coming after me, the lace of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.^c **8** I baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with holy spirit."^d

9 In the course of those days, Jesus came from Naz'a-reth of Gal'i-lee and was baptized in the Jordan by John.^e **10** And immediately on coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens being parted and, like a dove, the spirit coming down upon him.^f **11** And a voice came out of the heavens: "You are my Son, the beloved; I have approved you."^g

12 And immediately the spirit impelled him to go into the wilderness. **13** So he continued in the wilderness for 40 days, being tempted by Satan.^h He was with the wild beasts, but the angels were ministering to him.ⁱ

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus went into Gal'i-lee,^j preaching the good news of God^k **15** and saying: "The appointed time has been fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent,^l and have faith in the good news."

16 While walking alongside the Sea of Gal'i-lee, he saw Simon and Simon's brother Andrew^m casting their nets into the sea,ⁿ for they were fishermen.^o **17** So Jesus said to them: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."^{*p} **18** And at once they abandoned their nets and followed him.^q **19** After going a little farther, he saw James the son of Zeb'e-dee and his brother John, while they were in their boat mending their nets,^r **20** and without delay he

1:17 *Or "people."

called them. So they left their father Zeb'e-dee in the boat with the hired men and went off after him. **21** And they went into Cap'er'na-um.

As soon as the Sabbath began, he went into the synagogue and started to teach.^a **22** And they were astounded at his way of teaching, for he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.^b

23 Just then there was a man in their synagogue who was under the power of an unclean spirit, and he shouted: **24** "What

have we to do with you, Jesus the Naz'a-rene'?"^c Did you come to destroy us? I know exactly who you are, the Holy One of God!"^d **25** But Jesus rebuked it, saying: "Be silent, and come

out of him!" **26** And the unclean spirit, after throwing the man into a convulsion and yelling at the top of its voice, came out of him. **27** Well, the people were all so astonished that they began to discuss it among themselves, saying: "What is this? A new teaching! He authoritatively orders even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." **28** So the report about him spread quickly in all directions throughout the entire region of Gal'i-lee.

29 At that they left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon and Andrew with James and John.^e **30** Now Simon's mother-in-law^f was lying down sick with a fever, and they at once told him about her. **31** Going to her, he took her by the hand and raised her up. The fever left her, and she began ministering to them.

32 After evening had fallen, when the sun had set, the people began bringing to him all who were ill and demon possessed;^g **33** and the whole city was gathered right at the door. **34** So he cured many who were ill

with various sicknesses,^a and he expelled many demons, but he would not let the demons speak, for they knew him to be Christ.*

35 Early in the morning, while it was still dark, he got up and went outside and left for an isolated place, and there he began praying.^b **36** However, Simon and those with him hunted him down **37** and found him, and they said to him: "Everyone is looking for you." **38** But he said to them: "Let us go somewhere else, into the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also, for this is why I have come."^c **39** And he went, preaching in their synagogues throughout the whole of Gal'i-lee and expelling the demons.^d

40 There also came to him a leper, pleading with him even on bended knee, saying to him: "If you just want to, you can make me clean."^e **41** At that he was moved with pity, and he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him: "I want to! Be made clean."^f **42** Immediately the leprosy vanished from him, and he became clean. **43** Then he gave him strict orders and at once sent him away, **44** saying to him: "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing the things Moses directed,^g for a witness to them."^h **45** But after going away, the man started to proclaim it a great deal and to spread the account widely, so that Jesus was no longer able to enter openly into a city, but he stayed outside in isolated places. Yet they kept coming to him from all sides.ⁱ

2 However, after some days he again entered into Ca-per'-na-um, and the word spread that he was at home.^j **2** And so

1:34 *Or possibly, "they knew who he was."

MARK 1:35–2:15

many gathered that there was no more room, not even around the door, and he began to speak the word to them.^a **3** And they brought him a paralytic carried by four men.^b **4** But they could not bring him right to Jesus because of the crowd, so they removed the roof above Jesus, and after digging an opening, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic was lying. **5** When Jesus saw their faith,^c he said to the paralytic: **“Child, your sins are forgiven.”**^d **6** Now some of the scribes were there, sitting and reasoning in their hearts:^e **7** “Why is this man talking this way? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins except one, God?”^f **8** But immediately Jesus discerned by his spirit that they were reasoning that way among themselves, so he said to them: **“Why are you reasoning these things in your hearts?”**^g **9** Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and pick up your stretcher and walk’? **10** But in order for you to know that the Son of man^h has authority to forgive sins on earth—”ⁱ he said to the paralytic: **11** **“I say to you, Get up, pick up your stretcher, and go to your home.”** **12** At that he got up and immediately picked up his stretcher and walked out in front of them all. So they were all astonished, and they glorified God, saying: “We have never seen anything like this.”^j

13 Again he went out alongside the sea, and all the crowd kept coming to him, and he began to teach them. **14** And as he was passing by, he caught sight of Le’vi the son of Al-phae’-us sitting at the tax office, and he said to him: **“Be my follower.”** At that he rose up and followed him.^k **15** Later he was dining*

2:15 *Or “reclining at the table.”

MARK 2:16–3:8

in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining* with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many of them who were following him.^a

16 But when the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they began saying to his disciples: “Does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” **17** On hearing this, Jesus said to them: “Those who are strong do not need a physician, but those who are ill do. I came to call, not righteous people, but sinners.”^b

18 Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees practiced fasting. So they came and said to him: “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees practice fasting, but your disciples do not practice fasting?”^c **19** So Jesus said to them: “While the bridegroom^d is with them, the friends of the bridegroom have no reason to fast, do they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. **20** But days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them,^e and then they will fast on that day. **21** Nobody sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old outer garment. If he does, the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear becomes worse.^f **22** Also, no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost as well as the skins. But new wine is put into new wineskins.”

23 Now as he was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, his disciples started to pluck the heads of grain as they went.^g **24** So the Pharisees said to him: “Look here! Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” **25** But

2:15 *Or “reclining at the table.”

he said to them: "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and the men with him were hungry?"^a

26 How, in the account about A·bi'a·thar^b the chief priest, he entered into the house of God and ate the loaves of presentation,* which it is not lawful for anybody to eat except the priests,^c and he also gave some to the men who were with him?"

27 Then he said to them: "The Sabbath came into existence for the sake of man,^d and not man for the sake of the Sabbath.

28 So the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath."^e

3 Once again he entered into a synagogue, and a man with a withered* hand was there.^f

2 So they were watching him closely to see whether he would cure the man on the Sabbath, in order to accuse him. **3** He said to the man with the withered* hand:

"Get up and come to the center." **4** Next he said to them:

"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life* or to kill?"^g But they kept silent.

5 After looking around at them with indignation, being thoroughly grieved at the insensibility of their hearts,^h he said to the man:

"Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

6 At that the Pharisees went out and immediately began holding council with the party followers of Herodⁱ against him, in order to kill him.

7 But Jesus departed for the sea along with his disciples, and a great multitude from Gal'i-lee and from Ju-de'a followed him.^j

8 Even from Jerusalem and from Id·u·me'a and from across the Jordan and from around Tyre and Si'don, a great multi-

2:26 *Or "the showbread." 3:1, 3 *Or "paralyzed." 3:4 *Or "soul."

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF MARK

Mark may have become a follower of Jesus when he was a young man living with his mother in Jerusalem. In fact, it seems that their home was used as a meeting place by the early Christian congregation.

While Mark may have had limited contact with Jesus, he enjoyed association with the Apostles Peter and Paul, as well as Mark's cousin Barnabas.

He had the privilege to assist Paul and Barnabas in the missionary work. His ministry also took him to such distant places as Babylon and Rome.

Perhaps between the years 60 and 65 C.E., while in Rome, Mark wrote an account of Jesus' life. This became the third Gospel to be circulated among the early Christian congregations.

Although most of Mark's information is also contained in the other Gospels, he does include some unique details. For example, it is evident that this book was written with a non-Jewish audience in mind, especially the Romans.

Mark explains Jewish expressions, and customs, that would have been unfamiliar to Romans and other non-Jews.

He may have obtained much of his information from Peter who was an eyewitness of practically all that Mark recorded. Peter's eyewitness testimony may be seen in Mark's vivid descriptions of Jesus' activity and feelings.

The Book contains sixteen chapters, and is the shortest of the four Gospels.

It covers the time period from 29 to 33C.E.

Chapters 1 to 10 begin with John the Baptist's ministry, and Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. Then Mark describes Jesus' exciting three and a half year ministry. These Chapters recount Jesus' selection of his Apostles, many of his miracles, and examples of his tender care and concern for people.

Chapters 11 to 15 outline Jesus' final week of activity leading up to his arrest and execution.

Did you know? Mark was likely the young man who ran away leaving his garment behind on the night Jesus was arrested.

Finally, **Chapter 16** shows that three faithful women are the first to discover that Jesus has been resurrected.

As you read this Gospel note how Jesus demonstrated his power over sickness, death and the forces of nature; how he showed his tender care and concern for people; and, how he zealously carried out his father's will, providing a glimpse of his future rulership as King of God's Kingdom.

People from far and wide have now heard of Jesus. Many travel even to out-of-the-way places to hear him teach and to see his powerful works. However, after some days he returns to Capernaum, his center of activity. News of his return spreads quickly through this city alongside the Sea of Galilee. As a result, many come to the house where he is. Some are Pharisees and teachers of the Law who have come from all over Galilee and Judea, including Jerusalem.

'So many gather that there is no more room, not even around the door, and he begins to speak the word to them.' (Mark 2:2) The stage is now set for something truly remarkable. It is an event that can help us to appreciate that Jesus has the power to remove the cause of human suffering and restore health to all whom he chooses.

While Jesus is teaching in the crowded room, four men bring a paralyzed man on a stretcher. They want Jesus to heal their friend. Yet, because of the crowd, they cannot "bring him right to Jesus." (Mark 2:4) Imagine how disappointing that is. They climb up onto the flat roof of the house and make an opening through the tiles. Then they lower the stretcher holding the paralyzed man down into the house.

Does Jesus get angry at the interruption? No, indeed! He is deeply impressed by their faith and says to the paralyzed man: "Your sins are forgiven." (Matthew 9:2) But can Jesus actual-

ly forgive sins? The scribes and the Pharisees take issue with this, reasoning: "Why is this man talking this way? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins except one, God?"—Mark 2:7.

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus says to them: "Why are you reasoning these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and pick up your stretcher and walk?'" (Mark 2:8, 9) Yes, based on the sacrifice that Jesus will in time offer, he can forgive the man's sins.

Then, Jesus shows the crowd, including his critics, that he has authority to forgive sins on earth. He turns to the paralytic and gives the command: "I say to you, Get up, pick up your stretcher, and go to your home." And the man immediately does that, walking out carrying his stretcher before the eyes of all those present. The people are amazed! They glorify God and exclaim: "We have never seen anything like this!"—Mark 2:11, 12.

It is worthy of note that Jesus mentions sins in connection with sickness and that forgiveness of sins can be linked to physical health. The Bible teaches that our first parent, Adam, sinned and that all of us have inherited the consequences of sin, namely, sickness and death. But under the rule of God's Kingdom, Jesus will forgive the sins of all who love and serve God. Then sickness will be removed forever.—Romans 5:12, 18, 19.

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- ◇ What leads Jesus to heal a paralyzed man in Capernaum?
 - ◇ How does the man reach Jesus?
 - ◇ What can we learn from this event about the link between sin and sickness, and what hope does this offer us?
-

MARK

Study Notes—Chapter 1

Title

Mark: From the Latin name Marcus. Mark was the Roman surname of the “John” mentioned at Ac 12:12. His mother was Mary, an early disciple who lived in Jerusalem. John Mark was “the cousin of Barnabas” (Col 4:10), with whom he traveled. Mark also traveled with Paul and other early Christian missionaries. (Ac 12:25; 13:5, 13; 2Ti 4:11) Although the Gospel nowhere specifies who wrote it, writers of the second and third centuries C.E. ascribe this Gospel to Mark.

According to Mark: None of the Gospel writers identify themselves as such in their accounts, and titles are evidently not part of the original text. In some manuscripts of Mark’s Gospel, the title appears as *Eu-ag·ge’li·on Ka·ta’ Mar’kon* (“Good News [or, “Gospel”] According to Mark”), whereas in others a shorter title, *Ka·ta’ Mar’kon* (“According to Mark”), is used. It is not clear exactly when such titles were added or began to be used. Some suggest the second century C.E., since examples of the longer title have been found in Gospel manuscripts that have been dated to the end of the second century or early third century. According to some scholars, the opening words of Mark’s book (“The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God”) may have been the reason why the term “gospel” (lit., “good news”) came to be used to describe these accounts. The use of such titles along with the name of the writer may have come about for practical reasons, providing a clear means of identification of the books.

1:1

the good news: First occurrence of the Greek word *eu-ag·ge’li·on*, rendered “gospel” in some English Bibles. A

related Greek expression *eu·ag·ge·li·stes'*, rendered “evangelizer,” means “a proclaimer of good news.”—Ac 21:8; Eph 4:11, ftn.; 2Ti 4:5, ftn..

the good news about Jesus Christ: This expression in Greek could also be translated “the good news of Jesus Christ,” that is, the good news that Jesus proclaimed.

the Son of God: Although some manuscripts omit “the Son of God,” the longer reading has strong manuscript support.

1:2

Isaiah the prophet: The quote that follows is a combination of prophecies from Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3. Both prophecies are applied to John the Baptizer. The parentheses serve to distinguish the Malachi quotation from the Isaiah quotation, which starts in verse 3 and highlights the content of John’s message. The Malachi quote focuses on John’s role as the messenger. The entire quote is attributed to Isaiah, perhaps because the quotation from Isaiah contains the part to be stressed.

Look!: The Greek word *i·dou'*, here rendered “look!,” is often used to focus attention on what follows, encouraging the reader to visualize the scene or to take note of a detail in a narrative. It is also used to add emphasis or to introduce something new or surprising. In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the term occurs most frequently in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and in the book of Revelation. A corresponding expression is often used in the Hebrew Scriptures.

1:3

Jehovah: In this quote from Isa 40:3, the divine name, represented by four Hebrew consonants (transliterated *YHWH*), occurs in the original Hebrew text. (See App. C.) Mark applies this prophecy to what “John the Baptizer” (Mr 1:4) did in preparing the way for Jesus.—See study note on Mt 3:3.

Make his roads straight: May allude to the custom of ancient rulers to have men prepare the way before the royal chariot by removing large stones and even building causeways and leveling hills.

1:4

the Baptizer: Or “the Immerser; the Dipper.” The Greek participle rendered “Baptizer” here and at Mr 6:14, 24 could also be rendered “one who baptizes.” The form is slightly different from the Greek noun *Ba·pti·stes*’, which is rendered “Baptist” at Mr 6:25; 8:28 and in Matthew and Luke. The two designations, “Baptizer” and “Baptist,” are used interchangeably at Mr 6:24, 25.—See study note on Mt 3:1.

the wilderness: That is, the wilderness of Judea.—See study note on Mt 3:1.

baptism in symbol of repentance: Lit., “baptism of repentance.” Baptism did not wash away sins. Rather, those baptized by John publicly repented over sins against the Law, showing their determination to change their behavior. This repentant attitude helped lead them to the Christ. (Ga 3:24) John was thereby preparing a people to see “the salvation” that God had provided.—Lu 3:3-6; see study notes on Mt 3:2, 8, 11 and Glossary, “Baptism; Baptize”; “Repentance.”

1:5

all the territory . . . all the inhabitants: The use of “all” here is hyperbole; it emphasizes the intense interest that John’s preaching aroused. It does not mean that every single inhabitant of Judea or Jerusalem went out to see him.

baptized: Or “immersed; dipped.”—See study note on Mt 3:11 and Glossary, “Baptism; Baptize.”

openly confessing their sins: Refers to people who admitted publicly or acknowledged openly their sins against the Law covenant.

1:6

clothing of camel's hair: John's garment of woven camel's hair and his **leather belt** are reminiscent of the dress of the prophet Elijah.—2Ki 1:8; Joh 1:21.

locusts: Rich in protein, these insects are designated by the Law as clean for food.—Le 11:21, 22.

wild honey: That is, honey from natural beehives found in the wilderness, not from beehives kept by people. Eating locusts and wild honey was not unusual for people living in the wilderness.

1:7

stronger: Signifies having “more authority.”

sandals: To remove and carry another's sandals or to untie another's sandal laces (Mr 1:7; Lu 3:16; Joh 1:27) was considered a menial task that was often done by a slave.

1:8

baptized you: Or “immersed you.”— The Greek word *ba·pti'zo* means “to dip; to plunge.” Other Biblical references indicate that baptism involves complete immersion. On one occasion, John was baptizing at a location in the Jordan Valley near Salim “because there was a great quantity of water there.” (Joh 3:23) When Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, they both “went down into the water.” (Ac 8:38) The same Greek word is used in the *Septuagint* at 2Ki 5:14 when describing that Naaman “plunged into the Jordan seven times.”—See Glossary, “Baptism; Baptize.”

baptize you with holy spirit: Or “immerse you in holy active force.” Here John the Baptizer announces that Jesus would

institute a new arrangement, baptism with holy spirit. Those baptized with God's spirit become His spiritual sons, with prospects of living in heaven and ruling as kings over the earth.—Re 5:9, 10.

1:9

those days: According to Lu 3:1-3, John the Baptizer began his ministry “in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,” that is, during the spring of 29 C.E. (See study note on Lu 3:1.) About six months later, in the fall of 29 C.E., Jesus came to John to be baptized.—See App. A7.

1:10

immediately: The first of 11 occurrences of the Greek word *eu·thys'* in Mark chapter 1. (Mr 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43) The Greek term is rendered “immediately; at once; without delay; as soon as,” according to context. Mark's frequent use of the term—over 40 times in his Gospel—adds a feeling of vividness and urgency to his account.

he: Evidently referring to Jesus. As shown at Joh 1:32, 33, John the Baptist also witnessed this, but Mark's account seems to be from Jesus' perspective.

like a dove: Doves had both a sacred use and a symbolic meaning. They were offered as sacrifices. (Mr 11:15; Joh 2:14-16) They symbolized innocence and purity. (Mt 10:16) A dove released by Noah brought an olive leaf back to the ark, indicating that the floodwaters were receding (Ge 8:11) and that a time of rest and peace was at hand (Ge 5:29). Thus, at Jesus' baptism, Jehovah may have used the dove to call attention to the role of Jesus as the Messiah, the pure and sinless Son of God who would sacrifice his life for mankind and lay the basis for a period of rest and peace during his rule as King. The **coming down** of

God's **spirit**, or active force, upon Jesus at his baptism may have looked like the fluttering of a dove as it nears its perch.

upon: Or "into," that is, to enter into him.

1:11

a voice came out of the heavens: The first of three instances in the Gospel accounts where Jehovah is reported as speaking directly to humans.—See study notes on Mr 9:7; Joh 12:28.

You are my Son: As a spirit creature, Jesus was God's Son. (Joh 3:16) From the time of his birth as a human, Jesus was a "son of God" just as perfect Adam had been. (Lu 1:35; 3:38) However, it seems reasonable that God's words here go beyond a mere statement of Jesus' identity. By this declaration accompanied by the outpouring of holy spirit, God evidently indicated that the man Jesus was begotten as His spiritual Son, "born again" with the hope of returning to life in heaven and anointed by spirit to be God's appointed King and High Priest.—Joh 3:3-6; 6:51; compare Lu 1:31-33; Heb 2:17; 5:1, 4-10; 7:1-3.

I have approved you: Or "I am well-pleased with you; I take great delight in you." The same expression is used at Mt 12:18, which is a quotation from Isa 42:1 regarding the promised Messiah, or Christ. The outpouring of holy spirit and God's declaration concerning his Son were a clear identification of Jesus as the promised Messiah.—See study notes on Mt 3:17; 12:18.

1:12

the spirit impelled him to go: Or "the active force moved him to go." The Greek word *pneu'ma* here refers to God's spirit, which can act as a driving force, moving and impelling a person to do things in accord with God's will.—Lu 4:1; see Glossary, "Spirit."

1:13

Satan: From the Hebrew word *sa-tan'*, meaning “resister.”

the wild beasts: In Jesus’ day, there were many more wild animals in that region of the world than there are today. The wilderness was the habitat of boars, hyenas, leopards, lions, and wolves. Mark is the only Gospel writer to mention that there were wild beasts in this area. He evidently wrote primarily for non-Jewish readers, including Romans and others who may not have been familiar with the geography of Israel.

1:15

The appointed time has been fulfilled: In this context “the appointed time” (Greek, *kai-ros*) refers to the time, as foretold in the Scriptures, for Jesus’ earthly ministry to begin, giving people the opportunity to **have faith in the good news**. The same Greek word is used of the “time” of inspection that Jesus’ ministry brought (Lu 12:56; 19:44) and the “appointed time” of his death.—Mt 26:18.

the Kingdom of God: This expression occurs 14 times in the Gospel of Mark. Matthew uses this phrase only four times (Mt 12:28; 19:24; 21:31; 21:43), but he uses the parallel phrase, “the Kingdom of the heavens,” some 30 times. (Compare Mr 10:23 with Mt 19:23, 24.) Jesus made the Kingdom the theme of his preaching. (Lu 4:43) There are over 100 references to the Kingdom in the four Gospels, most of them in statements made by Jesus.—See study notes on Mt 3:2; 4:17; 25:34.

1:16

the Sea of Galilee: A freshwater inland lake in northern Israel. (The Greek word translated “sea” may also mean “lake.”) It has been called the Sea of Chinnereth (Nu 34:11), the lake of Gennesaret (Lu 5:1), and the Sea of Tiberias (Joh 6:1). It lies an average of 210 m (700 ft) below sea level. It is 21 km (13 mi)

long from N to S and 12 km (8 mi) wide, and its greatest depth is about 48 m (157 ft).—See App. A7, Map 3B, “Activity at the Sea of Galilee.”

1:17

fishers of men: A play on words based on the occupation of Simon and Andrew. It indicates that they would be “catching people alive” for the Kingdom. (Lu 5:10, ftn.) The implication may also be that, like fishing, disciple-making would be strenuous, labor-intensive work that required perseverance but sometimes produced few results.

1:19

James . . . and his brother John: James is always mentioned along with his brother John, and in the majority of instances, he is mentioned first. This may indicate that he was the older of the two.—Mt 4:21; 10:2; 17:1; Mr 1:29; 3:17; 5:37; 9:2; 10:35, 41; 13:3; 14:33; Lu 5:10; 6:14; 8:51; 9:28, 54; Ac 1:13.

1:20

with the hired men: Only Mark mentions that the fishing business of Zebedee and his sons had “hired men.” Peter, who was evidently a partner in the business and an eyewitness to most of what Mark recorded, may have been the source of this information. (Lu 5:5-11; see also “Introduction to Mark.”) That Zebedee and his sons hired men and, according to Luke’s account, had more than one boat indicates that their business was doing well.—See study note on Mt 4:18.

1:21

Capernaum: From a Hebrew name meaning “Village of Nahum” or “Village of Comforting.” (Na 1:1, ftn.) A city of major importance in Jesus’ earthly ministry, it was located at the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee and was called “his own city” at Mt 9:1.

synagogue: A word meaning “a bringing together; an assembly,” but in most scriptures, the building or place where Jews assembled for Scripture reading, instruction, preaching, and prayer. In Jesus’ day, each sizable town in Israel had a synagogue, and the larger cities had more than one.—Lu 4:16; Ac 13:14, 15.

1:22

his way of teaching: This expression refers to how Jesus taught, his teaching methods, which also included what he taught.

not as the scribes: Rather than quote revered rabbis as an authority, as was the scribes’ custom, Jesus speaks as Jehovah’s representative, **as one having authority**, basing his teachings on God’s Word.—Joh 7:16.

1:23

an unclean spirit: Mark uses this expression interchangeably with the term “demon.” (Compare Mr 1:23, 26, 27 with 1:34, 39; also Mr 3:11, 30 with 3:15, 22.) The use of this expression highlights the moral and spiritual uncleanness of the demons as well as their unclean influence on humans.

he shouted: When the man shouted the words recorded in verse 24, Jesus rebuked the source of his words, the unclean spirit that was controlling him.—Mr 1:25; Lu 4:35.

1:24

What have we to do with you, . . . ?: Or “What is there in common between us and you?” Literally translated, this rhetorical question reads: “What to us and to you?” This Semitic idiom is found in the Hebrew Scriptures (Jos 22:24; Jg 11:12; 2Sa 16:10; 19:22; 1Ki 17:18; 2Ki 3:13; 2Ch 35:21; Ho 14:8), and a corresponding Greek phrase is used in the Christian Greek Scriptures (Mt 8:29; Mr 1:24; 5:7; Lu 4:34; 8:28; Joh 2:4). The

exact meaning may vary, depending on context. In this verse, it expresses hostility and repulsion, and some have suggested a rendering such as: “Do not bother us!” or “Leave us alone!” In other contexts, it is used to express a difference in viewpoint or opinion or to refuse involvement in a suggested action, without indicating disdain, arrogance, or hostility.—See study note on Joh 2:4.

we . . . I: Since only one unclean spirit is mentioned in verse 23, the spirit controlling the man evidently speaks in the plural (“we”) with reference to his fellow demons and then in the singular (“I”) with reference to himself alone.

1:25

Be silent: Lit., “Be muzzled.” Although the unclean spirit knew that Jesus was the Christ, or Messiah, and addressed him as “the Holy One of God” (vs. 24), Jesus would not allow demons to witness about him.—Mr 1:34; 3:11, 12.

1:32

when the sun had set: Sunset marked the end of the Sabbath day. (Le 23:32; Mr 1:21; see study notes on Mt 8:16; 26:20.) Now with no fear of criticism, all the Jews could begin bringing their sick ones to be cured.—Compare Mr 2:1-5; Lu 4:31-40.

ill and demon possessed: Demons at times caused the people they controlled to suffer from some kind of physical disorder. (Mt 12:22; 17:15-18) However, the Scriptures differentiate between ordinary sickness and the harm caused by demon possession. Regardless of the cause of their suffering, Jesus cured them.—Mt 4:24; 8:16; Mr 1:34.

1:33

the whole city: Similar to the use of “all” at Mr 1:5, the use of “whole” is evidently hyperbole; it vividly describes a large number of people.

1:34

they knew him to be Christ: Some Greek manuscripts read “they knew him,” which could be rendered “they knew who he was.” The parallel account at Lu 4:41 reads: “They knew him to be the Christ.”

1:37

Everyone: Evidently hyperbole to emphasize that a large number of people were looking for Jesus.

1:39

preaching . . . throughout the whole of Galilee: This marks the beginning of Jesus’ first preaching tour of Galilee with his four recently selected disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, and John.—Mr 1:16-20; see App. A7.

1:40

a leper: A person suffering from a serious skin disease. The leprosy referred to in the Bible is not restricted to the disease known by that name today. Anyone diagnosed with leprosy became an outcast from society until he was cured.—Le 13:2, ftn., 45, 46; see Glossary, “Leprosy; Leper.”—See Glossary, “Leprosy; Leper.”

on bended knee: In the ancient Near East, kneeling was a posture that expressed respect, especially when petitioning superiors. Mark is the only Gospel writer to use this specific term in connection with this event.

1:41

moved with pity: Or “moved with compassion.” (See study note on Mt 9:36.) A few modern Bible translations say “was indignant (angry).” However, the reading “moved with pity (compassion)” can be found in the majority of ancient manuscripts, including the earliest and most authoritative ones. Also, the context supports

the idea that Jesus is motivated, not by anger, but by compassion.

touched him: The Mosaic Law required that lepers be quarantined to protect others from contamination. (Le 13:45, 46; Nu 5:1-4) However, Jewish religious leaders imposed additional rules. For example, no one was to come within four cubits, that is, about 1.8 m (6 ft) of a leper, but on windy days, the distance was 100 cubits, that is, about 45 m (150 ft). Such rules led to heartless treatment of lepers. Tradition speaks favorably of a rabbi who hid from lepers and of another who threw stones at them to keep them at a distance. By contrast, Jesus was so deeply moved by the leper's plight that he did what other Jews would consider unthinkable—he touched the man. He did so even though he could have cured the leper with just a word.—Mt 8:5-12.

I want to: Jesus not only acknowledged the request but expressed a strong desire to respond to it, showing that he was motivated by more than just a sense of duty.

1:44

say nothing to anyone: Jesus likely gave this order because he did not want to magnify his own name or do anything to draw attention away from Jehovah God and the Kingdom good news. His approach fulfilled the prophetic words of Isa 42:1, 2, which say that Jehovah's servant would "not make his voice heard in the street," that is, in some sensational way. (Mt 12:15-19) Jesus' humble attitude provides a refreshing contrast to that of the hypocrites whom he condemns for praying "on the corners of the main streets to be seen by men." (Mt 6:5) Jesus apparently wanted solid evidence, not sensational reports of his miracles, to convince people that he was the Christ.

show yourself to the priest: In accord with the Mosaic Law, a priest had to verify that a leper was healed. This would require

that the cured leper travel to the temple and bring as an offering **the things Moses directed**, as outlined at Le 14:2-32.

MARK Study Notes—Chapter 2

2:1

Capernaum: From a Hebrew name meaning “Village of Nahum” or “Village of Comforting.” (Na 1:1, ftn.) A city of major importance in Jesus’ earthly ministry, it was located at the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee and was called “his own city” at Mt 9:1.

at home: Jesus spent most of the first three years of his ministry in and around Galilee with Capernaum the center of his activity. He may have stayed at the home of Peter and Andrew.—Mr 1:29; see study note on Mt 9:1.

2:4

removed the roof . . . digging an opening: The roofs of many houses in first-century Israel were flat and were accessed by means of stairs or an external ladder. Mark’s account does not specifically state what the roof of this house was made of. But roofs were often constructed of wooden beams covered with branches, reeds, and a layer of earth, which was plastered. Some houses had tiles; according to Luke’s account, the man was lowered “through the tiling.” (See study note on Lu 5:19.) The friends of the paralytic man could easily have made an opening that would allow enough space to lower the stretcher into the crowded room below.

2:6

scribes: This term originally referred to copyists of the Scriptures, but during Jesus' time, it referred to those who were experts in the Law and teachers of it.—See Glossary, "Scribe."

2:8

by his spirit: Or "in himself (in his own mind)." Here the Greek word *pneu'ma* evidently refers to Jesus' perceptive powers. Isa 11:2, 3 says about the Messiah: "The spirit of Jehovah will settle upon him," so he would not base his judgment on "what appears to his eyes." As a result, Jesus was able to discern the thinking, reasoning, and motives of others.—Joh 2:24, 25.

2:9

Which is easier: It would be easy for someone to say that he could forgive sins, since no visible evidence would be needed in order to substantiate such a claim. But to say, **Get up . . . and walk** required a miracle that would make plain for all to see that Jesus had the authority to forgive sins. This account and Isa 33:24 link sickness to our sinful condition.

2:10

Son of man: Or "Son of a human." This expression occurs about 80 times in the Gospels. Jesus used it to refer to himself, evidently emphasizing that he was truly human, born from a woman, and that he was a fitting human counterpart to Adam, having the power to redeem humankind from sin and death. (Ro 5:12, 14-15) The same expression also identified Jesus as the Messiah, or the Christ.—Da 7:13, 14; see Glossary.

to forgive sins on earth—: The dash indicates that Jesus stopped in mid-sentence and then powerfully proved his point by publicly healing the man.

2:13

the sea: That is, the Sea of Galilee. A freshwater inland lake in northern Israel. (The Greek word translated “sea” may also mean “lake.”) It has been called the Sea of Chinnereth (Nu 34:11), the lake of Gennesaret (Lu 5:1), and the Sea of Tiberias (Joh 6:1). It lies an average of 210 m (700 ft) below sea level. It is 21 km (13 mi) long from N to S and 12 km (8 mi) wide, and its greatest depth is about 48 m (157 ft).—See App. A7, Map 3B, “Activity at the Sea of Galilee.”—Mr 1:16

2:14

Levi: In the parallel account at Mt 9:9, this disciple is called Matthew. When referring to him as a former tax collector, Mark and Luke use the name Levi (Lu 5:27, 29), but they use the name Matthew when mentioning him as one of the apostles (Mr 3:18; Lu 6:15; Ac 1:13). The Scriptures do not reveal whether Levi already had the name Matthew before becoming a disciple of Jesus. Mark is the only Gospel writer to mention that Matthew Levi was the son of Alphaeus.—See study note on Mr 3:18.

Alphaeus: Evidently not the same person as the Alphaeus mentioned at Mr 3:18 (see study note on Mr 3:18), who was the father of James, the 9th apostle of the 12 apostles listed.—Mt 10:3; Lu 6:15.

tax office: Or “tax collection booth.” This could be a small building or a booth where the tax collector sat and gathered taxes on exports, imports, and goods taken through a country by merchants. Levi, also known as Matthew, worked at a tax office located in or near Capernaum.

Be my follower: The Greek verb used in this exhortation has the basic sense of “to go along behind, come after,” but here it means “to follow someone as a disciple.”

2:15

dining: Or “reclining at the table.” To recline with someone at a table indicated close fellowship with that person. Thus, Jews in Jesus’ day would normally never have reclined at the table, or taken a meal, with non-Jews.

his house: Refers to Levi’s house.—Mt 9:10; Lu 5:29.

sinners: The Bible shows that all humans are sinners. (Ro 3:23; 5:12) Therefore, the term is used here in a more specific way, evidently referring to those who had a reputation for practicing sin, perhaps of a moral or a criminal nature. (Lu 7:37-39; 19:7, 8) The Jewish religious leaders also applied this term to Jewish or non-Jewish people who were ignorant of the Law or who failed to observe the rabbinic traditions.

2:16

tax collectors: Many Jews collected taxes for the Roman authorities. People hated such Jews because they not only collaborated with a resented foreign power but also extorted more than the official tax rate. Tax collectors were generally shunned by fellow Jews, who put them on the same level as sinners and prostitutes.—Mt 11:19; 21:32.

2:19

friends of the bridegroom: Lit., “sons of the bridechamber,” an idiom describing wedding guests but especially the friends of the bridegroom.

2:23

through the grainfields: Perhaps by means of footpaths that separated one tract of land from another.

2:26

in the account about: The Greek preposition *e·pi'* used here can refer to time or to place/location, such as a passage of Scripture. Most translators understand it to mean “*when* (Abiathar was . . .).” However, as explained in the study note on **Abiathar the chief priest** in this verse, the historical event that Jesus is referring to (1Sa 21:1-6) makes it more likely that the Greek preposition should be understood in a locative sense, that is, referring to a Scriptural account. A similar Greek structure is found at Mr 12:26 and Lu 20:37, where many translations use the phrase “in the account (passage) about.”

Abiathar the chief priest: The Greek term used here may be rendered “high priest” or “chief priest.” The latter rendering is more appropriate for Abiathar, since his father, Ahimelech, was high priest on the occasion described. (1Sa 21:1-6) Abiathar is first mentioned shortly after David entered the house of God and ate the showbread. It seems that as a son of High Priest Ahimelech, Abiathar was already serving as a prominent, or chief, priest at that time. He was the only son of Ahimelech to survive the slaughter by Doeg the Edomite. (1Sa 22:18-20) He later became high priest, evidently during David’s reign. Even if the rendering “high priest” is used, the Greek construction rendered “in the account about” is broad and may refer to the larger section of 1Sa chapters 21 to 23, where Abiathar was the most well-known high priest. Some Greek scholars favor the rendering “in the time of Abiathar the high priest,” which could also refer to the overall time period, including the time when Abiathar later became high priest. Whatever the explanation, we can be sure that this statement of Jesus was in harmony with the historical facts.

house of God: Here referring to the tabernacle. The account Jesus refers to (1Sa 21:1-6) occurred when the tabernacle was

located at Nob, a town evidently in the territory of Benjamin and close to Jerusalem.—See App. B7 (inset).

loaves of presentation: Or “showbread.” The Hebrew expression literally means “bread of the face.” The bread was figuratively before Jehovah as a constant offering to him.—Ex 25:30; See Glossary, “Showbread” and App. B5.

2:28

Lord . . . of the Sabbath: Jesus applies this expression to himself (Mt 12:8; Lu 6:5), indicating that the Sabbath was at his disposal for doing the work commanded by his heavenly Father. (Compare Joh 5:19; 10:37, 38.) On the Sabbath, Jesus performed some of his most outstanding miracles, which included healing the sick. (Lu 13:10-13; Joh 5:5-9; 9:1-14) This evidently foreshadowed the kind of relief he will bring during his Kingdom rule, which will be like a sabbath rest.—Heb 10:1.

- Song 130 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **"Your Sins Are Forgiven":** (10 min.)
[Play the video *Introduction to Mark*.]
Mr 2:3-5—Jesus compassionately forgave the sins of a paralytic (jy 67 ¶3-5)
Mr 2:6-12—Jesus proved that he has authority to forgive sins by healing the paralytic (nwtsty study note on Mr 2:9)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
Mr 1:11—What is the meaning of Jehovah's words to Jesus? (nwtsty study notes)

Mr 2:27, 28—Why did Jesus call himself "Lord . . . of the Sabbath"? (nwtsty study note)

What has this week's Bible reading taught you about Jehovah?

What other spiritual gems have you discovered in this week's Bible reading?

- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) Mr 1:1-15

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Begin with the sample conversation. Respond to an objection that is common in your territory.
- **First Return Visit:** (3 min. or less) Use the sample conversation.
- **Second Return Visit Video:** (5 min.) Play and discuss the video.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 44
- **"I Came to Call, Not Righteous People, But Sinners":** (7 min.) Discussion. Play the video *From Prison to Prosperity* (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES). Then ask the following questions: How did Donald get his life back? As we preach, how can we imitate Jesus' impartial treatment of people? —Mr 2:17.
- **Jehovah Forgives "in a Large Way":** (8 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Jehovah, I'm Going to Put You First* (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES). Then ask the following questions: How and why did Anneliese return to Jehovah? (Isa 55:6, 7) How can you use her experience to help those who have drifted away from Jehovah?
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) jy chap. 17
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 86 and Prayer


MARK 1-2 | "Your Sins Are Forgiven"



2:5-12

What do we learn from this miracle?

- Sickness is linked to inherited sin
- Jesus has the authority to forgive sins and the power to heal sick people
- Under the Kingdom, Jesus will remove imperfection and sickness forever

 How can Mark 2:5-12 help me to endure when I am sick?





Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK

Sample Conversations

●○○ INITIAL CALL

Question: Where can we find solid advice on how to live a happy life?

Scripture: Ps 1:1, 2

Link: What effect can the love of money and possessions have on our happiness?



○●○ FIRST RETURN VISIT

Question: What effect can the love of money and possessions have on our happiness?

Scripture: 1Ti 6:9, 10

Link: What are the benefits of maintaining a positive attitude?



○○● SECOND RETURN VISIT

Question: What are the benefits of maintaining a positive attitude?

Scripture: Pr 17:22

Link: How can a family prosper despite difficulties?

44 *A Prayer of the Lowly One* (Psalm 4:1)

1. Jehovah God, I call to you and ask you:

“Hear my prayer.”

My wounds are deep and slow to heal;
my load is hard to bear.

Despondent thoughts and disappointed hopes
have left me weak.

O God of comfort, care for me;
your favor I do seek.

(CHORUS)

Do raise me up; help me endure.

When I'm in doubt, make my hope sure.

From deep despair, I turn to you.

Jehovah God, my strength renew.

2. Your Word has been my comfort and
a refuge when I'm weak,

Expressing feelings dear to me
in words I cannot speak.

Please build in me the faith and trust
that your Word does impart.

And help me always know your love
is greater than my heart.

(Chorus)

- Song 130 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

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- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) jy chap. 17
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 86 and Prayer


MARK 1-2 | “Your Sins Are Forgiven”



2:5-12

What do we learn from this miracle?

- Sickness is linked to inherited sin
- Jesus has the authority to forgive sins and the power to heal sick people
- Under the Kingdom, Jesus will remove imperfection and sickness forever

 How can Mark 2:5-12 help me to endure when I am sick?



From Prison to Prosperity

My name is Donald. I was born and raised in Brooklyn New York.

As I was growing up, you know, I gravitated toward the streets. Started using marijuana. Got into a lot of trouble in school, and it just snowballed.

I wanted to know God but I was just too preoccupied with running the streets and getting high.

I was messed up. I got strung out, was in the street, wound up in jail, and that's where I got my witness, in prison.

It was a slow process as I was getting to know Jehovah, and I was making the changes. A lot of us going in, we were depressed because of the situation. We were looking for some hope going in there with 25 years, 15 years. You know, and you're thinking in your life is over. Your life's not over! You know, Jehovah could do a lot with you. Jehovah can, you know, your whole perspective can change.

I knew that if I applied what I learned, Jehovah would not let me down.

[Donald was baptised as one of Jehovah's Witnesses while in prison]

I made a lot of decisions based on what I was learning, and what I wanted to do for the future, because I knew God could help me get my life back.

When I finally made my first meeting, I'm sitting in the congregation, I go straight to the front. I'm in Jehovah's House. I'm all right. I was determined that I was gonna keep studying. And I have people's respect. You know, the congregation looks up to me and I always

attribute that to Jehovah. I never had this, you know, I was just a bum on the street.

From my very first meeting it felt like my congregation was my family.

My studying has helped me to be a better husband, and I respect my wife, and I love my wife, and I wanna be loyal and faithful to my wife.

I spent seven and a half years of my life in prison. And it was like I thought my life was, it was worthless. There is not a day I don't go thank Jehovah for taking me out of the darkness.

You know, He wants to take care of us and He don't care what the situation is. He can take us up out of any situation, if we're just willing to do it his way.

[Donald was released from prison on February 24, 2005]

[He and his wife regularly share in teaching the Bible to others]

17

HE TEACHES NICODEMUS AT NIGHT

JOHN 2:23–3:21

-
- JESUS TALKS WITH NICODEMUS
 - WHAT IT MEANS TO BE “BORN AGAIN”
-

While he is in Jerusalem for the Passover of 30 C.E., Jesus performs remarkable signs, or miracles. As a result, many people put faith in him. Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish high court called the Sanhedrin, is impressed. Wanting to learn more, he visits Jesus after dark, probably because he fears that his reputation with the other Jewish leaders will be damaged if he is seen.

“Rabbi,” Nicodemus says, “we know that you have come from God as a teacher, for no one can perform these signs that you perform unless God is with him.” In reply, Jesus tells Nicodemus that in order to enter the Kingdom of God, a person must be “born again.”—John 3:2, 3.



How, though, can a person be born again? “He cannot enter into the womb of his mother a second time and be born, can he?” Nicodemus asks.—John 3:4.

No, that is not what being born again means. Jesus explains: “Unless anyone is born from water and spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) When Jesus was baptized and holy spirit descended upon him, he was thus born “from water and spirit.” At that time, there was an accompanying declaration from heaven: “This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.” (Matthew 3: 16, 17) In this way, God announced that he had brought forth Jesus as a spiritual son having the prospect of entering into the heavenly Kingdom. Later, at Pentecost 33 C.E., holy spirit will be poured out on other baptized ones, and they will thus be born again as spiritual sons of God.—Acts 2:1-4.

It is difficult for Nicodemus to understand what Jesus is teaching him about the Kingdom. So Jesus gives further information regarding his special role

as God's human Son. Jesus says: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of man must be lifted up, so that everyone believing in him may have everlasting life."—John 3:14, 15.

Long ago those Israelites who were bitten by poisonous snakes had to look at the copper serpent to be saved. (Numbers 21:9) Similarly, all humans need to exercise faith in God's Son to be saved from their dying condition and to gain everlasting life. Stressing Jehovah's loving role in this, Jesus next tells Nicodemus: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Hence, here in Jerusalem some six months after beginning his ministry, Jesus makes clear that he is the way to salvation for mankind.

Jesus tells Nicodemus: "God did not send his Son into the world for him to judge the world." This means that he was not sent to judge it adversely, condemning all humans to destruction. Rather, as Jesus says, he was sent "for the world to be saved through him."—John 3:17.

Nicodemus has fearfully come to Jesus under cover of darkness. So it is interesting that Jesus closes his conversation with him by saying: “Now this is the basis for judgment: that the light [which Jesus is by his life and teachings] has come into the world, but men have loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were wicked. For whoever practices vile things hates the light and does not come to the light, so that his works may not be re-proved. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that his works may be made manifest as having been done in harmony with God.”—John 3: 19-21.

Now it is up to this Pharisee and teacher of Israel, Nicodemus, to reflect on what he has just heard about Jesus’ role in God’s purpose.

- ◇ What prompts Nicodemus to visit Jesus, and why at night?
- ◇ What does it mean to be “born again”?
- ◇ In what sense has Jesus not come “to judge the world”?

We Must Be Taught

(Isaiah 50:4; 54:13)

1. Come with rejoicing, and learn about Jehovah.
“Come drink life’s water,” the spirit has said.
Healthful instruction, God has provided.
All those who hunger for truth will be fed.
2. Never forsaking our gathering together,
We must be taught; we must learn what is right.
Here with God’s spirit, here with our brothers,
Here we are strengthened to walk in the light.
3. Lips that sing praise, how encouraging to hear them!
Tongues of the taught ones, how sweet is their sound!
Oh, may we always meet with God’s people!
Oh, may we always among them be found!

FEBRUARY 2018

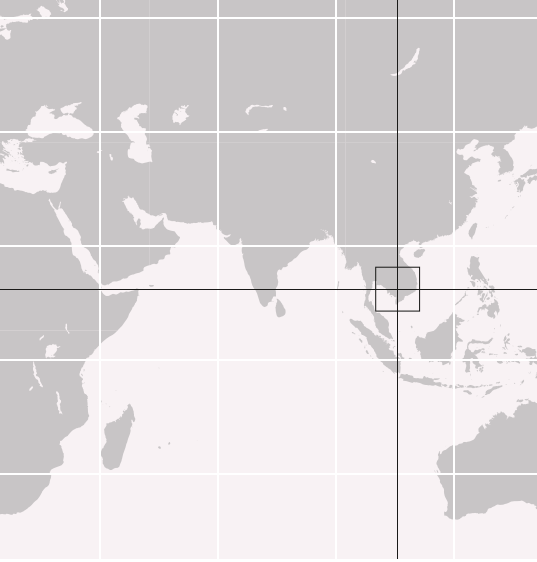
THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
APRIL 2-29, 2018

LARGE
PRINT
EDITION



COVER IMAGE:

CAMBODIA

A Witness couple share the Bible's message of good news with a mother who picked up her son from school. She wears a traditional head scarf

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New World Translation
of the Holy Scriptures.

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What Does It Mean to Be a Spiritual Person?

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Move Forward as a Spiritual Person!

In the first of these two articles, we will see what spirituality is and what we can learn from exemplary spiritual people. Then in the second article, we will consider how we can cultivate spirituality and put it to work in our daily lives.

52 Joy—A Quality We Acquire From God

60 FROM OUR ARCHIVES

1. Kind and patient, perfect in love,
Was Christ, who came down from above.
He took care of our needs
With words and by deeds;
He gave of his time and his love.
He would keep the lowly in mind
By healing the sick, deaf, and blind.
To his royal commission he proved true
And willingly said: “I want to.”
2. We now try to follow his way
In all of our dealings each day.
We are loving and kind
To all whom we find;
We help them to learn and obey.
We respond to friends when in need;
We love them in word and in deed.
So if widows and orphans should ask you,
Then readily say: “I want to.”



SONGS:

17, 13

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How can we identify a spiritual person?

What can we learn from exemplary spiritual people?

Why should we strive to have “the mind of Christ”?

What Does It Mean to Be a Spiritual Person?

“May [God] grant you to have among yourselves the same mental attitude that Christ Jesus had.”—ROM. 15:5.

“BEING a spiritual person has made me happier, and it has helped me deal successfully with daily trials,” says a sister in Canada. A brother in Brazil states, “Our 23 years

1, 2. (a) How do many view spirituality? (b) What key questions about spirituality will we consider?

of marriage have been very happy—thanks to our efforts to be spiritually-minded.” And a brother in the Philippines notes, “Being a spiritual person has allowed me to have peace of mind, and it has helped me improve in my dealings with brothers from different backgrounds.”

² Expressions like those portray spirituality in a favorable way. As a result, we may be moved to ask ourselves, ‘How can I grow as a spiritual person and enjoy more fully the benefits described above?’ However, before we answer that, we need to understand clearly what the Bible says about spiritual, or spiritually-minded, people. In this article, we will answer three key questions. (1) What does it mean to be a spiritual person? (2) What examples will help us to progress in our spirituality? (3) How will our effort to have “the mind of Christ” help us to be spiritual people?

WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL PERSON?

³ The apostle Paul helps us to understand what a spiritual person is by drawing a contrast between a “spiritual man” and “a physical man.” (Read **1 Corinthians 2:14-16.**) What is the difference? The

3. How does the Bible’s description of a physical man differ from that of a spiritual man?

“physical man” is described as not accepting “the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot get to know them.” On the other hand, “the spiritual man” is someone who “examines all things” and who has “the mind of Christ.” Paul encourages us to be spiritual people. In what other ways do physical and spiritual individuals differ?

⁴ Consider first the attitude of a physical individual. The world has a predominant attitude that centers on the flesh. Paul describes it as “the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.” (Eph. 2:2) This spirit influences most humans to adopt a common attitude—simply follow the crowd. They are focused on the flesh. As a result, the majority of them do what feels right in their own eyes and make no effort to live up to God’s standards. A physical, or fleshly-minded, person is often excessively concerned about prestige and material pursuits or about defending what he feels are his rights.

⁵ What else might identify a physical person? People who engage in any of “the works of the flesh” fall into that category. (Gal. 5:19-21) Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian congregation identifies a number of other characteristics of those who have a fleshly at-

4, 5. What are the characteristics of a physical person?

titude. These include: promoting divisions, taking sides, fostering dissensions, taking one another to court, showing a lack of appreciation for headship, and being self-indulgent in food and drink. When confronted with temptation, the fleshly-minded person weakens and gives in. (Prov. 7:21, 22) Jude spoke of those who would deteriorate even to the point of “not having spirituality.”—Jude 18, 19.

⁶ What, then, does it mean to be a “spiritual man”? A spiritual person is inclined toward God, the opposite of the physical person. Spiritually-minded individuals strive to “become imitators of God.” (Eph. 5:1) This means that they make an effort to have Jehovah’s thinking on matters and to look at things from his point of view. God is very real to them. In contrast with fleshly-minded individuals, they try to bring all their ways into harmony with Jehovah’s standards. (Ps. 119:33; 143:10) Rather than focus on fleshly works, the spiritually-minded person endeavors to show “the fruitage of the spirit.” (Gal. 5:22, 23) To clarify the expression “spiritually-minded” further, think of this comparison: An individual who is skillful in commercial affairs is said to be business-minded. Similarly, someone who keenly values spiritual or religious interests is called spiritually-minded.

6. What identifies a spiritual person?

⁷ The Bible speaks highly of spiritually-minded people. Matthew 5:3 says: “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need, since the Kingdom of the heavens belongs to them.” Romans 8:6 shows the advantage of being spiritually-minded, saying: “Setting the mind on the flesh means death, but setting the mind on the spirit means life and peace.” By focusing on spiritual things, we gain peace with God and with ourselves now and the prospect of everlasting life in the future.

⁸ However, we live in a dangerous environment. Since fleshly attitudes are all around us, we need to put forth real effort to develop spirituality and to guard it once we have it. If a person loses his spirituality, he creates a moral vacuum and the polluted “air” of this world will rush in. What can help us to prevent that from happening? How can we grow spiritually?

EXAMPLES TO LEARN FROM

⁹ A child can become mature by observing his parents and copying their good example. In like manner,

-
7. What does the Bible say about spiritually-minded people?
 8. Why is effort needed to develop and maintain spirituality?
 9. (a) What can help us to grow spiritually? (b) What examples of spiritual people will we consider?

we can grow spiritually by observing and imitating spiritually strong people. Conversely, fleshly-oriented people serve as warning examples for us. (1 Cor. 3:1-4) The Bible contains both types of examples. But since our goal is to grow as spiritual people, let us take a look at several positive examples of individuals we can imitate. We will consider the examples of Jacob, Mary, and Jesus.

¹⁰ First, take the example of Jacob. As is true of most of us today, Jacob did not have an easy life. He had to put up with his fleshly-minded brother, Esau, who intended to kill him. On top of that, he had to deal with a deceitful father-in-law, who repeatedly tried to exploit him. Yet, despite being surrounded by “physical” men, Jacob was a spiritual man. He had faith in the promise made to Abraham and devoted himself to caring for the family who would play a special role in the outworking of Jehovah’s purpose. (Gen. 28:10-15) Jacob’s words and actions reveal that he had God’s standards and will in mind. For example, when he felt threatened by Esau, Jacob said to God: “Save me, I pray you . . . You have said: ‘I will certainly deal well with you, and I will make your offspring like the grains of sand of the sea.’” (Gen. 32:6-12) He obviously put faith in Jehovah’s

10. How did Jacob show himself to be a spiritual man?

promises to him and his forefathers and wanted to act in harmony with God's will and purpose.

¹¹ Now consider another example, that of Mary. Why did Jehovah choose Mary to become Jesus' mother? No doubt because she was a spiritually-minded person. How do we know that? She showed clear evidence of spirituality in her beautiful expressions of praise when she visited the home of her relatives Zechariah and Elizabeth. (Read Luke 1:46-55.) Mary's statements show that she had a deep love for God's Word and was thoroughly familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures. (Gen. 30:13; 1 Sam. 2:1-10; Mal. 3:12) Note, too, that she and Joseph, although newly married, refrained from sexual relations until Jesus was born. What does that indicate? It shows that both of them were more concerned with Jehovah's will than with satisfying their personal desires. (Matt. 1:25) As time passed, Mary carefully noted what took place in Jesus' life and paid attention to the words of wisdom he spoke. Furthermore, she "kept all these sayings in her heart." (Luke 2:51) She was clearly interested in God's purpose in connection with the Messiah. Does not Mary's example help us to think of how we can put God's will first in our life?

11. What shows that Mary was a spiritual person?



What can we learn from the examples of Jacob and Mary?
(See paragraphs 10, 11)



¹² Yet, of all the people who have lived, who is the most outstanding example of a spiritual person? It is Jesus, of course. Throughout his life and ministry, he showed that he wanted to imitate his Father, Jehovah. He thought, felt, and acted like Jehovah and lived in harmony with God's will and standards. (John 8:29; 14:9; 15:10) Note, for example, how Jehovah's feelings of compassion are described by the prophet Isaiah, and compare that description with what the Gospel writer Mark reports about Jesus' feelings. (Read Isaiah 63:9; Mark 6:34.) Are we like Jesus, ever ready to show compassionate concern when we meet people who need help? In addition, Jesus devoted himself to the work of preaching and teaching the good news. (Luke 4:43) All such feelings and actions are marks of a spiritual person.

¹³ Aside from Scriptural examples, there are many modern-day examples of spiritually-minded individuals who have made great progress in reflecting a Christlike personality. Perhaps you have noticed their zeal in the ministry, their outstanding hospitality, their compassion, or other fine qualities. They, like us, have battled weaknesses and imperfections

12. (a) In what way did Jesus resemble his Father? (b) How can we imitate Jesus' example? (See opening picture.)

13, 14. (a) What can we learn from modern-day examples of spiritually-minded people? (b) Relate an example.

while trying to develop those godly qualities. Rachel, a sister in Brazil, says: “I loved to follow the world’s fashions. As a result, I did not dress very modestly. But learning the truth moved me to make the needed effort to be a spiritual person. Making changes was not easy, but I became happier and found real purpose in life.”

¹⁴ Reylene, from the Philippines, had a different challenge. She focused on pursuing higher education and good employment in order to get ahead in life. She says: “My spiritual goals started to fade. But I began to realize that something was missing in my life, something far more important than my job. As a result, I redirected my focus to serving Jehovah.” Since then, Reylene has been a living example of putting faith in Jehovah’s promise found at Matthew 6: 33, 34. She says: “I know for sure that Jehovah will take care of me!” Perhaps you know of similar examples in your congregation. Are we not moved to imitate such faithful ones as they follow the Christ? —1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:7.

HAVE “THE MIND OF CHRIST”

¹⁵ How can we personally imitate Christ? The Bible

15, 16. (a) To be like Christ, what do we need to do? (b) How can we expose our mind to “the mind of Christ”?

at 1 Corinthians 2:16 speaks of having “the mind of Christ.” And Romans 15:5 refers to having “the same mental attitude that Christ Jesus had.” Therefore, to be like Christ, we need to know his pattern of thinking and the full range of his personality. Then we need to follow in his footsteps. Jesus’ mind is focused on his relationship with God. So being like Jesus makes us more like Jehovah. For these reasons, it becomes clear how important it is to learn to think as Jesus does.

¹⁶ How can we do this? Jesus’ disciples saw his miracles, heard his discourses, watched how he dealt with all kinds of people, and observed how he applied godly principles. They said: “We are witnesses of all the things he did.” (Acts 10:39) We, however, cannot observe him directly. But Jehovah has lovingly provided the Gospel accounts that can make Jesus’ personality come alive in our mind. By reading and meditating on the Bible books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we expose our mind to Christ’s mind. We thus can “follow his steps closely” and “arm [ourselves] with the same mental disposition” as Christ had.—1 Pet. 2:21; 4:1.

¹⁷ How will learning to think like Christ help us? Just as nourishing food strengthens the physical

17. How will thinking like Christ help us?

body, feeding our mind on Christ's thinking fortifies our spirituality. Gradually, we come to know what Christ would do in any situation. This, in turn, helps us to make decisions that leave us with a clean conscience and God's approval. Do you not agree that these benefits give us good reason to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ"?—Rom. 13:14.

¹⁸ We have considered what it means to be a spiritual person. We have also seen that we can learn from good examples of spiritual people. Finally, we have learned how having "the mind of Christ" helps us to grow as a spiritual person. However, there are several other aspects of spirituality that we should consider. For example, how can we analyze the strength of our own spirituality? What more can we do to cultivate it? And how will our spirituality impact our daily life? The next article will help to answer these questions.

18. What have you learned from this discussion on being a spiritual person?

Christ, Our Model

(1 Peter 2:21)

1. What love Jehovah showed,
 What goodness from him flowed,
 When for all mankind he offered his Firstborn.
Christ took on human form—
 The Son of man was born—
 By his example, God's name he adorned.
2. Jehovah's Word, he said,
 Sustained his life like bread.
 It gave him wisdom and knowledge and insight.
His Father's willing slave,
 A model Jesus gave;
 To please his Father would bring him delight.
3. Like Jesus, may our days
 Provide Jehovah praise,
 And may his footsteps become our own roadway.
Let Jesus' model be
 Our path eternally,
 And then God's favor we'll know day by day.

