



Bible
BOOK CLUB

May 2021 - Mark

OPENING PRAYER

God who loves us through our imperfections and impatience, you mightily used the imperfect and impatient writings of Mark to change the face of history. Help us to have the faith to push past our own flaws, and to dare to innovate and create for the sake of the Good News. Amen.

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- Mark starts with Jesus already an adult. What would Christianity look like, do you think, if there were no other Gospels to add birth and childhood stories—only Mark’s emphasis on Jesus as miracle healer, warning of the impending and dangerous coming of the Reign of God?
- Mark’s the simplest of the gospels. Mark’s sentences are short, awkward, and sometimes not well-written. But Mark was the first gospel, the one others followed. Have you experienced times when a blunt or imperfect approach still got a message across?
- “Looking up to heaven, Jesus sighed and said, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” (Mark 7:34) Can you think of times where healing—of whatever it might be—required some mental, spiritual, physical, or emotional blockage to be opened?
- In Mark, Jesus often touches the people he heals. Other gospel writers have him using only words. What changes about your conception of Jesus when you think of him making physical contact with those he healed as opposed to commands?
- What kind of ethics, or morality, do you feel should come from hearing Jesus say “there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile” (Mark 7:15)?
- Mark has short, punchy, sentences and lots of action. But spend some time with the book and you realize there are layers of meaning and symbol. Do you know anyone like that—seemingly not sophisticated, but once you get to know them, deeply complex and thoughtful? Or seemingly crass action movies that actually have a profound message?

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BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- Two people who had to almost force Jesus into healing them or their families (chapters 5 and 7) were women. Both disputed with him and won. Jesus ended by commending both for their faith. How have women's struggles changed? How have they not changed?
- Mark reports Jesus saying: "There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power" (9:1). Two thousand years later, we're still waiting. Could Jesus have been wrong? What should we do in the meantime?
- "Whoever is not against us is for us," Jesus told disciples (9:40) when they tried to control other healers. Is this the usual way we and our institutions work? Matthew and Luke seem to have reversed the saying to "whoever is not for us is against us." What might change if we were really to adopt Mark's approach?
- Unlike other gospels, Mark has no resurrection appearances of Jesus. It ends with an empty tomb, an angel's message to go seek Jesus at home, and that the women (Mark has no male witnesses) were "afraid." Why wouldn't Mark give his listeners the satisfaction of seeing Jesus, do you think, when the other gospels did?
- Which part of Mark resonates with you the most?

CLOSING PRAYER

God of the Gospel, continue to tell the stories of Jesus through us today. As Mark did his best to communicate the wonder of Jesus' life and the urgency of his message, may we do our best to complete his resurrection story by sharing the good news to those around us. Amen.

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This month's resource was prepared by Rev. Matthew Anderson.