



FOLLOW THE KING
A STUDY OF MARK

BY DR. JOHN MORRISON & SCOTT SMITH
DR. TYLER SMILEY, SENIOR PASTOR

 **Lakewood**
PRESS

FOLLOW THE KING: THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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LETTER FROM THE PASTOR



Mark's account of Jesus Christ opens with the telling line: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1). Mark's aim was clearly to announce the "good

news" of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Yet, he reveals the true background of this message of good news just a few verses later—"Now after John was arrested, 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'" (Mk 1:14–15). In the first 15 verses of Mark, we've already learned that Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, is the content of the gospel and also the one who brings the good news to us.

From here on out, everything we hear about Jesus in this true and inspired account reveals who he is, what he did, and what he accomplished for God's people. Jesus proved himself to be the Messiah, the Promised One of God, who would rescue God's people from the destructive power of sin and death—this is the good news that God's people had awaited for so long. In other words, to use Jesus's language from Mark 1:15, the good news is that God's kingdom was coming to earth, and fulfilling all the promises from God. Since Jesus is the content of the gospel, that would make him none other than the true King from God.

What you read in the rest of the story of Mark is the true account of the King, Jesus,

and the lengths he went to save God's people. His kingly reign is unlike any of the old kings in Israel's history. As Jesus said referencing himself in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus's kingship is characterized by the service the King offers to his people, which is an utter reversal of the story of the kings of old. The true King gives his life for his people, so that they may receive true life. This is the good news from God.

In these pages, you will hear of the King, and you will come to learn that following this King means giving your life for him. But when you give your life for him, you will find abundant life because he has already given his life for you.

This excellent study will be a great encouragement to the Christian, and also a great opportunity for a Christian to walk with another person who is not a Christian, has questions about Christianity, or is young in the faith. Scott Smith and John Morrison from our discipleship team at Lakewood have put together a wonderful resource, and Joy Willis has made it look as wonderful as the content truly is. I pray your walk with the Lord will be strengthened as you hear about the Good News of Jesus Christ, and learn to Follow the King.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Smiley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Dr. Tyler Smiley, Senior Pastor



WEEK 1.....6
MARK 1

WEEK 2.....13
MARK 2-3

WEEK 3.....19
MARK 4-5

WEEK 4.....25
MARK 6-8

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WEEK 1
MARK 1
DAY 1

READ Mark 1

REFLECT

Following the death and resurrection of Jesus, his closest followers went throughout the world to tell all who would listen about Jesus and what he had done. One of those followers was Peter. Just a few days after seeing Jesus ascend into heaven, Peter stood before a crowd in Jerusalem and proclaimed,

Hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. . . . Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified (Ac 2:22-24, 36).

The crowd responded, asking what they should do, and Peter told them to turn from their former ways of life and to turn to Jesus (Ac 2:37-41).

Peter spent the rest of his life proclaiming this good news of Jesus. He was joined in this work by John Mark (Ac 12:12), who would record Peter’s testimony about Jesus and write the Gospel of Mark in the middle of the first century, most likely just before Peter’s death. In writing this Gospel, Mark continues Peter’s ministry of telling others about Jesus and what he has done. Mark challenges his readers with two main questions throughout this Gospel:

- 1. WHO IS JESUS?**
- 2. HOW DO I FOLLOW HIM?**

Throughout the Gospel, the question resounds, “Who is Jesus?” As Jesus calmed the storm the disciples want to know, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (4:41). And Jesus himself asks, “Who do you say that I am?” (8:28).

Mark begins to answer this question in 1:1, stating clearly that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Gospel as a whole recounts how as the Son of God Jesus is at once both exalted and the one who suffers. Broadly speaking, the first half of the Gospel (1:1-8:26) demonstrates Jesus’s authority through his miracles and teaching, and the second half focuses on his suffering and death (8:27-16:8).

Mark, however, does more than merely recount the life of Jesus. He calls on his readers to respond to the life and ministry of Jesus. Thus, a second major question in this Gospel is: How do I follow Jesus? Mark demonstrates that to follow Jesus means to embrace him, his teaching, and his way of life. This is discipleship. Following Jesus begins with coming to know who he truly is: the God-man who reconciles sinners to God. When we come to know Jesus, to trust him, and to have true fellowship with him, we grow to be more and more like him. Through his transforming power in our lives, we begin to imitate his life of humility and suffering that glorifies God the Father.

Mark demonstrates that Jesus is the Son of God, the fully God and fully human Messiah who has come to redeem sinners. The life and work of Jesus demand a response, and the proper response is one of following him in trust and obedience. As you read through Mark, this guide will continue to put those questions before you: Who is Jesus? How do I follow him?

5 STEPS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

1

Read and reflect on the passages for each week from the Gospel of Mark. Interact with the Bible study and readings that follow.

2

Attend one of our corporate gatherings of the body each Sunday for worship.

3

Take notes from the sermon to assist you in better understanding the text.

4

Join a group to hear what others are learning and share what God is teaching you.

5

Prayerfully consider guiding someone else through this study in a one-to-one setting.

HABIT OF GRACE Each day also highlights a habit of grace, which is a practical step that God uses to grow us more like Jesus. We group these habits into five main categories: Word, community, prayer, service, and worship. These are habits Jesus himself lived and modeled.

What's in a name? Word, community, prayer, service, and worship are habits. They are not activities to be done sporadically; they are habits to pursue regularly. The gospel is not a call to make a decision, but rather, it is the call to become a disciple. It is the call to a new way of life. Following Jesus is a journey, and these habits are the steps we take daily to pursue him.

Not only are they habits, but they are gifts of God's grace. Any longing we have to be like Christ does not come from ourselves. Any desire to pursue these habits does not emanate from within us. It is a gift from God. Anything good we have in this life is a grace gift from God (Jas 1:17). These are not habits we can develop on our own; these are habits that God develops within us. By the Holy Spirit, God works through these habits to conform us to the image of Jesus for his glory.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, **let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

MARK 8:34-35

PRAY

Father, as I come to the Gospel of Mark, I pray that you would "open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things in your Word" (Ps 119:18). Please help me by your Spirit to see clearly who Jesus is and how I should follow him. Amen.

WEEK 1: DAY 2

READ Mark 1:1-11

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS? Gospel means good news, and Mark's Gospel is the good news about Jesus. Already in the first verse, Mark identifies Jesus as both the Christ and the Son of God. The next sixteen chapters will demonstrate what it means for Jesus to be the Christ and the Son of God.

What are the different ways Jesus is identified in Mark 1:1-11?

In verses 10-11, who else was present with Jesus at his baptism? What does God reveal about himself in these verses?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

If Jesus is God himself, what authority does he have? What authority does he have over your life?

HABIT OF GRACE The regular consumption of God's Word grows us as followers of Christ. It is through his Word that we believe and keep believing the good news of who Jesus is and what he has done. God's Word has great power. By his Word, God spoke this world into existence (Gen 1), and he promises that his Word will always accomplish his good purposes (Isa 55:10-11). He works through his Word and by his Spirit to transform us by the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2). We take in God's Word through the regular hearing, reading, and memorizing of Scripture.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Take time to thank God the Father for sending Jesus and for continuing the spread of this good news about him around the world and from generation to generation so that we might hear it and believe in Jesus.

WEEK 1: DAY 3

READ Mark 1:12-15

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

Who led Jesus in 1:12? How does this connect with 1:10-11?

What did Jesus do when he came into Galilee (1:14-15)?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

What does it mean to repent? What should that look like in your life?

What does it mean to believe in the gospel?

Would you describe yourself as someone who believes in the gospel? Why or why not?

HABIT OF GRACE Hearing God's Word is one of the key ways we take in Scripture. Preaching was a central component of Jesus's ministry (1:14), and his followers continue to proclaim his truth today. When we gather with the church for corporate worship, we hear God's Word read, prayed, sung, and preached. We grow as followers of Christ as we regularly hear God's Word, particularly as it is taught and preached. Consider where you can make a habit of gathering with God's people to hear God's Word.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Father, your Son calls on me to repent and to believe in the gospel. Please help me by your Spirit to live a life of repentance and to keep trusting in the good news of Jesus. Amen.

KINGDOM OF GOD

Throughout this Gospel, Mark emphasizes the authority of Jesus. He is a king, but his kingdom is unlike any this world has seen. God's kingdom is God's **PEOPLE** living in God's **PLACE** under God's **POWER** so that they experience the blessing of God's **PRESENCE**. In Jesus Christ, this kingdom has come, and yet we wait for it to come in fullness when Christ returns.

WEEK 1: DAY 4

READ Mark 1:16-34

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

How is Jesus's authority on display in these verses? What does this authority reveal about who he is?

What did the unclean spirit recognize about Jesus (1:24)?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

In 1:16-20, what stands out to you about the way these four people responded to Jesus?

What did they put aside to follow Jesus immediately?

What is Jesus calling on you to put down in order to follow him?

HABIT OF GRACE We also consume God's Word by the habit of reading Scripture. "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). If you want to become more like Christ, if you desire for your soul to be set apart and sanctified, if you long for your mind to be transformed and for your character to be developed, there is no better way for that to happen than the daily reading of God's Word.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

As you pray, ask the Father for faith to follow Jesus like his first disciples. Pray for the faith and courage to leave your life and immediately follow Christ.

WEEK 1: DAY 5

READ Mark 1:35-45

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

According to Jesus in 1:38, why did he come?

How does his proclaiming the kingdom connect with his casting out demons and healing people (1:39-42)?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

What did Simon Peter do in 1:36? What would it look like for you to search for Jesus today?

In 1:45, how did the man who was healed respond to Jesus's miraculous work in his life?

HABIT OF GRACE Another key practice to grow as a follower of Christ is the memorization of and meditation upon Scripture. The example of the psalmist should challenge us: "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." (Ps 119:11) Jesus himself models this practice, and we see him put it into practice to fight sin as the devil tempts him in Matthew 4:1-11 (this is a more detailed account of Mark 1:12-13). We memorize, and then we meditate upon that passage, not by emptying our minds, but by continuing to think about it over and over again. This is about far more than remembering information; it is about lives being transformed as our minds are renewed by the truth of God's Word.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Thank the Father that he has sent his Son Jesus to announce and to bring his kingdom.
Pray that God will work by his Spirit to help you search for Jesus in his Word and come to know him more deeply.



WEEK 2
MARK 2-3
DAY 1

READ Mark 2:1-12

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS? As Jesus continued to preach and heal, his work attracted large crowds. This particular crowd had grown so large that no one could get to him. The four friends in this account proved undeterred. They knew that they must get their friend to Jesus if he were to have any hope of being healed. They carried him onto the roof, dug a hole in the roof, and lowered their friend to Jesus. After all of this work, imagine their surprise when Jesus did not heal him but forgave his sins. Their stunned disappointment seems to have been matched only by the scribes' astonishment that Jesus would claim to be able to forgive sins. "Who," they asked themselves, "can forgive sins but God alone?" (2:7).

That is precisely the point. Only God can forgive sins, and Jesus offered that forgiveness. Jesus did, in fact, end up healing the man, so that they would know that "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (2:10). Jesus is the one who has authority to forgive sins. Jesus is God.

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

Jesus offers true healing and forgiveness and invites all to come to him.

If you were to come to Jesus, like the paralytic man in this account, what would you tell him is your greatest need?

Based on this passage, what do you think Jesus would see as your greatest need? Why?

HABIT OF GRACE. Community is an essential part of growing up in Christ. While our faith is personal, it was never intended to be private. Biblical community is about surrounding yourself with people who, like the friends in this account, help you get closer to Jesus. Church is the New Testament term for a community of believers who commit to grow closer to Jesus together.

SON OF MAN This is Jesus's preferred name for himself in Mark. Why, though, if this account is to emphasize Jesus's divinity does he call himself the Son of Man? The answer begins with the background to this title. Jesus pulled this name from the Old Testament book of Daniel where the prophet speaks of "one like a son of man" (Dan 7:13). This one is like a son of man, but he also has divine attributes. God the Father grants him "dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him" (Dan 7:14). This kingdom will be everlasting; it will not pass away. This is kingly language, but it is language describing a king unlike one the world had ever seen. The term "Messiah" or "Christ," which means anointed one and spoke of this long-awaited king was much better known in Jesus's day, but it also had the potential for misunderstanding. Jesus is a king unlike anything that was expected. Jesus adopted the title of "Son of Man" for himself, and in doing so, he pointed to the reality of his nature as fully human and fully divine and to the fact that he is king over all the earth.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me,

**let him deny himself and
take up his cross and follow me.**

For whoever would save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for my sake
and the gospel's will save it."

MARK 8:34-35

PRAY

As you pray, thank the Father for sending Jesus so that you could be forgiven for your sins.

WEEK 2: DAY 2

READ Mark 2:13-22

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

What kind of people did Jesus come to call (2:17)?

Why did Jesus's choice of people shock the religious leaders of his day? What kind of people would you have thought Jesus would choose as his followers?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

Does it seem like Jesus requires people to get their lives together before following him? What implication does that have for your life today?

Levi left a financially lucrative career as a tax collector to follow Jesus. Can you follow Jesus and continue in your current way of life?

HABIT OF GRACE Biblical community comes in all shapes and sizes from hundreds of people gathered to worship together to two believers seated around a table, discussing how the Bible applies to their lives. Like a balanced diet, these different types of community from the whole church, to small groups, to mentoring relationships are needed to help us grow as followers of Christ. While biblical community may come in a variety of forms, it must include the sharing of Scripture together. In order to be biblical, this community must be centered on the Word of God.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

*Father, thank you that you did not send Jesus to call perfect people.
Thank you that you sent him to call people like me who were running far from you.
Please help me by your Spirit to continue to see my need for Christ. Amen.*

WEEK 2: DAY 3

READ Mark 2:23-3:6

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

How does Jesus identify himself in 2:28?

Given who established the Sabbath (Ex 20:8-11), what does Jesus claim in saying this?

What do you notice about Jesus's character and his concern for others in these verses?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

Jesus understands God's laws to be life-giving rather than oppressive. Where have you been tempted to view God's law as oppressive rather than life-giving?

What steps can you take this week to imitate Jesus's life-giving view of the law rather than using God's rules to judge yourself or others harshly?

HABIT OF GRACE Biblical community grows us closer to Jesus as we share God's Word and share our lives with one another. Sharing our lives means that we are honest and genuine with one another. As those who know that Jesus came not to call the righteous but sinners, those in biblical community make no pretense of perfection. We can be transparent about our struggles and failures because we know that we are all following Jesus only by the grace of God.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Jesus reveals God to us, and we see in Jesus God's heart for his people.
Thank God for his care and concern for the lives of his people.

WEEK 2: DAY 4

READ Mark 3:7-21

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

According to 3:11, who is Jesus?

How did he demonstrate his authority as God's Son in today's reading?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

What two responses to Jesus do you see in 3:13 and 3:21? Which of these responses do you identify with more?

In 3:13, who came to Jesus? In 3:14-15, what did Jesus send them out to do?

What would it look like for you to be sent out by Jesus to continue his ministry in this world?

HABIT OF GRACE A key part of sharing our lives in gospel community is sharing our stories. Our stories are to be shared for God's glory. As those redeemed by God, we recount our stories of "how much the Lord has done for" us (Mk 5:19). Our stories have value as they honor God for his grace in our lives and as they point others to the same grace and freedom we have found in the gospel.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Ask the Father that he would work in your life by his Spirit to empower you to make Jesus known and to follow his way of life.

WEEK 2: DAY 5

READ Mark 3:22-35

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

In 3:22-29, Jesus describes two kingdoms at war. What are these kingdoms? What is Jesus's role in this battle?

Following Jesus not only makes us part of his kingdom but also part of his family (3:31-35). Who is Jesus in relation to us in this family?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

In Jesus's day, like our own, family was often a key part of one's identity. Jesus says in 3:31-35 that being part of his spiritual family is more fundamental than any other relationship or identity. What identity are you tempted to cling to more tightly than that of being a brother or sister of Jesus?

HABIT OF GRACE Biblical community that centers on sharing God's Word and sharing our lives often begins with sharing a meal. Eating together was a vital part of Jesus's ministry on earth (Mt 11:19), and the early church carried this on as they made gathering around a meal an integral part of their life together (Ac 2:42-47). Sharing a meal is a great way to begin and to strengthen gospel community.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Father, thank you for adopting me in Jesus and putting your Spirit of adoption in me so that I am now part of your family through faith in Jesus. Amen.



WEEK 3
MARK 4-5
DAY 1

READ Mark 4:1-20

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS? Jesus's message is that "the kingdom of God is at hand" (1:15). The kingdom is at hand because King Jesus has come. In Mark 4, Jesus tells parables that explain what his kingdom is like. His kingdom is unlike anything this world has ever seen, and Jesus himself proves to be the most unexpected king. He is the king who will conquer by dying. His kingdom will spread not by military might but through the telling of his good news.

Jesus begins with the parable of the sower. The sower goes into the field and spreads the seed. The resulting harvest depends upon the soil. After telling the parable to the crowd, Jesus explains it to the twelve disciples. The seed is the word, the gospel of Jesus. The different soils are different types of people, who all hear the word but receive it differently.

In between the parable and the explanation, Jesus offers his reason for teaching in parables. Just as the word sown will be received or rejected, so too the teachings of Jesus divide. Some will hear his words but never understand. Others will hear, understand, and respond in faith.

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

What type of soil best describes you?

Based on this parable, does Jesus desire a one-time commitment to him or a lifetime of following him? How could those two options look different?

HABIT OF GRACE

Prayer was a habit that marked Jesus's life (Mk 1:35). As we seek to follow him, Jesus invites us to pray and makes it possible for us to pray as he did. In fact, it is only through Jesus that we are able to pray to God as Father. When we trust in Jesus, we are adopted by God, so that as his sons and daughters we can pray to God as Father. He even sends the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of adoption, into our hearts to enable us to cry out to our heavenly Father. Our good and gracious Father hears and answers our prayers out of his boundless love and wisdom.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me,

**let him deny himself and
take up his cross and follow me.**

For whoever would save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for my sake
and the gospel's will save it."

MARK 8:34-35

PRAY

Ask the Father to make the word of the gospel effective in your life so that by the Holy Spirit you would live a life of fruitfulness.

WEEK 3: DAY 2

READ Mark 4:21-34

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

What do the parable of the seed growing and the parable of the mustard seed teach about Jesus and his kingdom?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

If the kingdom is like a growing seed, what characteristics of a farmer should you have to join in this kingdom?

What would it look like for you to sow the seed of Jesus's gospel in your community this week?

HABIT OF GRACE Often, when we want to pray, we do not know how. ACTS is a helpful acrostic based on the Lord's Prayer that can guide our prayers. "A" stands for adoration. We adore God when we praise him for something true about who he is. Praying Scripture is a great way to praise the Lord. Psalm 57:10 exclaims, "Your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds." From this verse, we could pray, "Father, I praise you that your love and faithfulness are greater than I could ever imagine. Amen."

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Consider a truth about who God is and praise him for it.

WEEK 3: DAY 3

READ Mark 4:35-41

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

How would you answer the disciples' question: "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41).

What does this account reveal about Jesus's authority?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

What does Jesus's question in 4:40 reveal about what it looks like to follow him?

Is your life more marked by faith in Jesus or fear of this world?

HABIT OF GRACE Confession is the "C" of ACTS. We confess when we acknowledge our sin to God and ask for his forgiveness based upon the work of Jesus. As our Savior taught us, we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Our God promises, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:9). Confession reminds us that we live daily in need of God's forgiveness that he freely offers through Christ.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Ask God to reveal your sin to you. Confess that sin, and ask him for forgiveness.

WEEK 3: DAY 4

READ Mark 5:1-20

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

How did the demon-possessed man describe Jesus in 5:7? What does this title reveal about Jesus?

What do we learn about Jesus's authority in this account? What do we learn about his mercy?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

In 5:17, the people begged Jesus to depart, but in 5:19-20, the man went and told all that Jesus had done for him. Which one of these responses better fits your response to Jesus? Why?

HABIT OF GRACE The "T" in ACTS stands for thanksgiving. Giving thanks to God for what he has done is an important part of prayer. From Scripture, we know that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas 1:17). All that is good is from God, and so we can thank him for everything from the everyday joys and blessings we experience in this world to his great work of redeeming us in Jesus Christ.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Take time today to thank God for his goodness and kindness to you.

WEEK 3: DAY 5

READ Mark 5:21-43

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

What power and authority does Jesus demonstrate in these two healings?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

What do we learn in this story about Jesus's timing?

Where is God calling on you to wait in faith for his perfect timing? What does that look like for you?

HABIT OF GRACE The "S" in ACTS stands for supplication. Supplication is when we request something from God. As Jesus teaches us in the Lord's Prayer, we should ask for both our physical and spiritual needs—for daily bread and to deliver us from evil. The order of ACTS helps get our hearts right in prayer: we praise God, confess our sin, and thank him before we ever ask for anything. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that it honors God when we make requests because such a prayer testifies to our need for him and our faith in him.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

As you consider Jesus's perfect timing in waiting to heal both the woman and Jairus's daughter, pray that God by his Spirit would work in your life to give you the faith to wait patiently for him.



WEEK 4
MARK 6-8
DAY 1

READ Mark 6:1-29

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS? When Jesus came to his hometown of Nazareth, many were astonished by the wisdom of his teaching (6:2). Rather than turn to him in faith, they rejected him with disdain (6:3-4). In fact, Mark records, “They took offense at him” (6:3). Jesus himself marveled at their unbelief (6:6). This account reminds us that even the wisdom and authority with which Jesus taught did not draw everyone to him. Many rejected him. He warns his disciples that they too will be rejected and gives instructions on how they should respond when faced with hostility (6:11). As if to reiterate the reality of rejection, Mark next turns to tell of John’s imprisonment and beheading (6:12-29). For all his power, authority, and wisdom, Jesus was still rejected and his followers will also face such rejection for their witness to him.

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

Why did Jesus’s hometown reject him? Why did Herod reject John?

Consider your own life: are you rejecting Jesus for these same reasons or are you willing to receive him in faith?

For those who did believe in Jesus, they went out two by two and proclaimed the message of Jesus (6:12). Who is someone you could join with to make Jesus known in your community? What is the next step you should take in this work?

HABIT OF GRACE

Following Jesus means that we join him in his mission. Near the end of his life on earth, he tells his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (Jn 20:21). What did the Father send Jesus to do? Jesus explains his mission, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). Christ Jesus came to serve, and his ultimate service was his atoning death as a ransom for his people. Yet, his service did not begin at the cross; he served throughout his ministry on earth. He served by proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and by caring for those in need. He served in both word and deed. Jesus now sends his followers into the world to serve as he served.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me,

**let him deny himself and
take up his cross and follow me.**

For whoever would save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for my sake
and the gospel's will save it."

MARK 8:34-35

PRAY

As you pray, ask the Father to work by his Spirit so that you would continue to trust in Jesus despite the temptations to reject him.

WEEK 4: DAY 2

READ Mark 6:30-56

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

What power and authority does Jesus demonstrate in his feeding the five thousand, walking on water, and healing many?

How do these miracles connect with Jesus's message that the kingdom of God has come?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

How did the disciples respond to Jesus in 6:49-52?

What about Jesus's power and authority caused fear?

Reflect on 6:52. What would it look like for you to understand Jesus and for your heart not to be hardened toward him?

HABIT OF GRACE Jesus sends his followers into the world to serve just as he was sent into the world to serve. One of the key ways Jesus served was in word, and so we too join him in his mission by proclaiming his gospel to others. Jesus began his ministry with this message: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15). We too are called to announce the good news of what God is doing through Jesus. We are to tell others about Jesus and his work and call upon people to turn from their sin and to turn to Christ in faith

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

*Father, I thank you that you sent Jesus with all power and authority over this world.
Thank you that even now, you are working by your Spirit for your kingdom
to come and your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Thank you that through Christ Jesus you are making all things new. Amen.*

WEEK 4: DAY 3

READ Mark 7:1-37

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

In Mark 7, Jesus demonstrated his power over demons and disease. He also taught with more authority than any human teacher or tradition, even religious ones. Who or what in your life do you consider more authoritative than Jesus? Whose words are you more likely to follow than Jesus's?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

Reflect on Jesus's words in 7:6-7. Do you merely honor Jesus with your lips or does he have your heart as well?

What would it look like for you to both believe in your heart and confess with your mouth (Rom 10:9-10)?

HABIT OF GRACE When it comes to serving others through the word of the gospel, there are minimalists and maximalists. Some will argue that you never need to vocalize the gospel: just love people and they will see Jesus. Others believe that you must share a summary of God's work from creation to new creation or else you have not shared the gospel. These two approaches miss the mark. We do not have to share the entire teaching of Scripture or every detail about Jesus in order to serve others with the gospel. However, we must share Christ and his good news through our words. Our greatest need is to be reconciled to God through Christ, and so we serve others when we tell them the hope found only in the gospel.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Ask the Father to lead you to honor him, his Son, and his Spirit in your heart, with your words, and by your actions.

WEEK 4: DAY 4

READ Mark 8:1-26

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

What do we learn about Jesus's heart for people in 8:2?

What do we learn about Jesus from his reaction to the Pharisees in 8:12?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

Consider 8:11-13. Are you trying to bargain with Jesus? Are you demanding something from him before you will follow him?

Based on this passage, how do you think Jesus would react to such bargaining? Why? How should you respond to him?

HABIT OF GRACE When we think about serving others by sharing the truth of the gospel, we can be tempted to think of going through a rehearsed presentation with someone. Conversations tend to go better and gain more traction when we move away from reciting a presentation and toward intersecting the gospel with everyday life. Consider the conversations you have frequently. As a student, you often discuss what is next in life. As a parent, fears for your child's wellbeing arise in conversation. As you work and prepare for retirement, questions of legacy and financial stability are commonplace. Truth about who God is and the hope of the gospel apply in all these situations. Consider the conversations you find yourself having regularly and consider how to intersect gospel truth with the cares of people's lives.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Thank Jesus for his compassion for people. Thank the Father that "he will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19).

WEEK 4: DAY 5

READ Mark 8:27-38

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

Who did Peter confess that Jesus is (8:29)? What did Jesus say he must endure (8:31-33)?

How does Jesus's explanation of his coming work compare with Peter's expectation?

How does your expectation of Jesus compare with how he reveals himself in Scripture?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

How does Jesus describe what it takes to follow him (8:34-38)?

Where is Jesus calling on you to deny yourself and follow him?

HABIT OF GRACE As the Father sent Jesus, so now Jesus sends us into the world to serve our neighbors through the sharing of the gospel. As Jesus entered into our world, so too must we enter into others' lives to share the good news with them. We cannot stand at a distance and shout the truth at them; rather, we draw near to them as Jesus has drawn near to us. As Paul reminds the Thessalonians, "We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves" (1 Thess 2:8). If we are to share the gospel with our neighbors, we will share our lives with them as well.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Father, please work by your Spirit to help me see the truth of who Jesus is and what he came to do. By your grace, may I deny myself, take up my cross, and follow him. Amen.



WEEK 5
MARK 9-10
DAY 1

READ Mark 9:1-29

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

In 9:7, who did the Father say Jesus is? How does this compare with 1:11?

How did Jesus describe himself in 9:9? What did he predict about what would happen to him?

How do these two titles, Beloved Son of God and Son of Man, relate to one another?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

What did the Father command the disciples to do (9:7)? How does Scripture allow you to do this today?

Consider the father's prayer in 9:24. What encouragement do you find in this response to Jesus?

HABIT OF GRACE

Jesus sends his followers into the world to serve the world in word and in deed. Just as his ministry included proclaiming the gospel and caring for those in need, so we are called to embody his mission of service to the whole person.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me,

**let him deny himself and
take up his cross and follow me.**

For whoever would save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for my sake
and the gospel's will save it."

MARK 8:34-35

PRAY

*Father, I hear the prayer of this father in the Gospel, and I echo it:
I believe in Jesus, but I pray that you would help my unbelief.
Please work by your Spirit to grow my faith in Jesus. Amen.*

WEEK 5: DAY 2

READ Mark 9:30-50

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

In 9:30-32, how did Jesus describe what he had come to do?

How would this work compare with people's expectations of a conquering king?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

According to 9:35, what does it look to follow the Savior who suffered and died?

Where can you embrace the call to be the "last of all and servant of all"? What is a specific step you can take this week to serve those in your life?

HABIT OF GRACE Our reading this week reminds us that Jesus's concern for us extends beyond our spiritual wellbeing. He did not come to save merely our souls but our whole selves. His ministry on earth was marked by healing, like the boy he healed in 9:14-29 and like blind Bartimaeus to whom he gives sight in 10:46-52. One day, Christ will come again to bring his kingdom to completion, to make all things new, and to usher in the new creation (Rev 21:5).

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Lord Jesus, thank you that you came and were delivered into the hands of men, killed, and rose again for us. Please help me by your Spirit to be a servant to all those around me. Amen.

WEEK 5: DAY 3

READ Mark 10:1-31

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

What stands out about Jesus as a teacher in this reading?

What does Jesus's interaction with children reveal about who he is?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

Why did Jesus tell the rich young man to sell all that he had, give it to the poor, and then follow Jesus?

If Jesus were to look at your life, what would he see as the greatest barrier to your following him fully?

Consider Mark 10:26-27. Why is it such good news that you cannot save yourself?

HABIT OF GRACE There is an earthiness to Jesus's spirituality. As he came to usher in God's kingdom and to give his life as a ransom for many, he invested much in the concerns of this world. In the reading this week, he taught his followers about marriage (10:1-11), he emphasized the importance of children (10:13-16), and he highlighted the need to care for the poor (10:17-22). We must guard against trying to be more spiritual than Jesus. If God has called you to marriage and a family, then it is good and right and God-honoring to care for that family. Your home is one of the key arenas where you can serve as Jesus served. Christ's encounter with the rich young man reminds us that good gifts from God, like family and financial stability, can easily become idols and barriers to following Jesus. Our families and our finances are not our own but belong to God. We must steward them for God's glory.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Ask the Father to work by his Spirit to reveal anything in your life that is keeping you from following Jesus. Pray for the faith to give even that area of your life to Jesus so that you can follow him.

WEEK 5: DAY 4

READ Mark 10:32-52

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

What did Jesus tell his disciples was about to happen in 10:32-33? Why did he continue to repeat this news?

In 10:45, Jesus described his death as a ransom. In what way is Jesus's death a ransom?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

How did Jesus describe who his followers become in 10:43-44?

How does the desire for prestige and honor show itself in your life? How do such things stand in the way of following Jesus?

How does Jesus empower us to follow in his path as a servant?

HABIT OF GRACE Following Jesus by serving others in word and deed should not be confused with the occasional kind deed. Service is a way of life for those who follow Jesus. We are called to embrace the attitude of a servant and even a slave as we seek to put others' interests above our own (Mk 10:43-44). Such service does not come naturally but is only possible by experiencing the radically transforming grace of God. When we are ransomed by Christ Jesus through faith in him (Mk 10:45), we are filled with his Holy Spirit who empowers us to live like Jesus to God's glory. Serving in the name of Christ is not something we can do on our own. Serving in Jesus's name happens by grace through faith; it is God working in us by his Spirit.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

From Philippians 2 pray, Jesus, thank you that even though you are by your very nature God, you did not consider that something to be exploited for your own advantage. Instead, you humbled yourself and became human like us. You became a servant and humbled yourself to the point of death, even death on a cross. May you be forever exalted. May every knee bow before you and every tongue confess that you are Lord to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

WEEK 5: DAY 5

READ Mark 11:1-33

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

How do the crowds praise Jesus in 11:9-10?

Who was King David? How would Jesus, a king riding humbly on a donkey, compare with most expectations of what the son of a warrior king like David would be?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

Over the past five weeks, where have your expectations of Jesus been challenged by the book of Mark?

If Jesus conquered not by riding upon a war horse brandishing a sword but by humbly riding a donkey to his death, what does that mean for how we should follow him?

HABIT OF GRACE When Jesus came to earth to redeem his people, he took on a complete human nature like ours. He took on a human body and soul because his mission was to redeem us in body and soul. He did not come to rescue our souls from this world, but to redeem this world and make it a new creation where we will one day enjoy his presence forever. Unlike many other faiths, followers of Jesus do not denigrate the body or think that our final hope is an escape from this world. Our God valued us so much that he has created us in his image and then took on a complete humanity to rescue us. When he came to earth, he cared for people's physical and spiritual needs, and so we go into the world to serve the world in both word and deed because our God took on flesh to rescue us.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Ask the Father to help you truly understand who Jesus is as the king who comes in his name. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you to follow this king who came humbly for us and for our salvation.



WEEK 6
MARK 12-16
DAY 1

READ Mark 12:1-44

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

How did Jesus explain who he is in 12:35-37?

Read 2 Samuel 7:12-15 and Psalm 110. How does Jesus fulfill this promise to David?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

According to 12:28-34, what does life following king Jesus look like?

What specific step can you take this week to demonstrate your love for God? For your neighbor?

HABIT OF GRACE

From eternity past, the Son of God has sought to glorify his Father, and when he came to earth, Jesus lived for the glory of the Father (Jn 13:32-33; Phil 2:9-11). If we are to follow Jesus, we will live to glorify God. To glorify God means we worship him. We praise him for who he is and what he has done. This is our goal in life. "Man's chief end," the Westminster Shorter Catechism states, "is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." We were created to glorify God and to enjoy him. This glorifying and worshipping God is not limited to an hour together with the church each week; rather, glorifying God is a way of life for followers of Jesus. As the Apostle Paul encourages, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31).

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me,

**let him deny himself and
take up his cross and follow me.**

For whoever would save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for my sake
and the gospel's will save it."

MARK 8:34-35

PRAY

Praise God that he is worthy of being loved with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Thank him for making a way for you to love him and to know him through Jesus. Pray that he will help you by his Holy Spirit to love him as he should be loved.

WEEK 6: DAY 2

READ Mark 13:1-37

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

Why is it important that Jesus is not only the crucified and risen king but also the returning king?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

What command did Jesus repeat in verses 9, 23, and 33? What command did he repeat in verses 35 and 37?

What would it look like for you to live “on guard” and to “stay awake” as you wait for Jesus’s return?

HABIT OF GRACE Encountering Jesus leads us to worship and to glorify God. When Jesus healed the paralytic man lowered through the roof, the crowds “were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’” (Mk 2:12). Worshipping God is the way of life for followers of Jesus. The Apostle Paul challenges those who follow Jesus, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). He calls us to present our bodies daily as living sacrifices. One of the great joys of the Christian faith is the truth that we can honor God with our daily lives wherever he has called us. From changing diapers to taking tests to selling widgets, we daily glorify the one, true, and living God when we trust in Jesus and live from a heart of faith to his glory.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Thank Jesus that he will one day return to this world and finish establishing his kingdom.

WEEK 6: DAY 3

READ Mark 14:1-72

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

How does the meal in 14:22-25 serve as a symbol of what Jesus is about to endure?

What did all of Jesus's closest followers do as he is arrested and put on trial?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

Peter provides a prime example of how not to follow Jesus, but have you considered that Jesus never denies Peter? Look at how Jesus restores Peter in John 21:15-19. What does this episode tell us about the forgiveness Jesus offers?

Read 2 Timothy 2:11-13. What do we learn about God's character in these verses? What comfort do you find in the truth that our relationship with God depends upon his faithfulness and not our own?

HABIT OF GRACE Following Jesus means that we worship God in our daily lives as we live in a manner worthy of the gospel. Scripture also calls us to gather regularly with God's people, the church, so that "together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 15:6). We are not to neglect meeting together, but we joyfully come together to glorify God and to encourage one another. When we gather to worship, we center our gathering on God's Word. We read, pray, hear, see, and sing Scripture.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Thank Jesus that he offered his body and blood up for us through the Holy Spirit to God our Father.

WEEK 6: DAY 4

READ Mark 15:1-47

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

Why did Jesus need to be forsaken by God (15:33-34) in order to be a ransom for many (10:45)?

Jesus reveals God to us. What do we learn about our God that he would suffer and die for us?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

When you consider Christ crucified do you have the same reaction as the centurion in 15:39?

What sort of life follows from a genuine confession that Jesus is God's Son?

HABIT OF GRACE One way we worship God is through giving. From the earliest days of our faith, followers of Jesus have given money toward Christ's mission when they gathered on the first day of the week (1 Cor 16:2). The call of the gospel is to give generously and cheerfully as we seek to follow our Jesus, who "though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). New Testament giving is gospel-rooted and grace-driven, but it requires far more than merely giving a percentage of our income. It requires our whole lives. In Christ, we find true freedom; the freedom to serve one another through love as we give financially and our very selves (Gal 5:13).

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Thank Jesus for giving his life on the cross as a ransom for many. Ask the Father to work in your heart by the Holy Spirit to believe and to confess that Jesus is the Son of God.

WEEK 6: DAY 5

READ Mark 16:1-8

REFLECT

WHO IS JESUS?

What remarkable truth did the angel announce in 16:6?

Why is the resurrection of Jesus so important to our faith?

HOW DO I FOLLOW JESUS?

What did the angel tell the woman at the tomb to do (16:7)?

How did the women respond (16:8)?

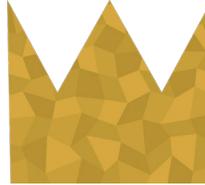
How will you respond to the good news of the resurrection? Will you believe, go, and tell? Or, will your fear and trembling drive you from Jesus and keep you silent?

HABIT OF GRACE Worshipping God through song has been a central way that God's people have glorified him. We are commanded in Scripture to sing praise to him. Our musical worship focuses on ascribing glory and honor to God. When we sing, we also encourage our fellow believers (Col 3:16). Our goal when we sing is not to create a certain set of feelings within us but to glorify God and encourage our neighbors. In addition to hearing and singing Scripture, we also see Scripture through the Lord's Supper. The Bible calls upon us as a church gathered to regularly celebrate with bread and the cup as a way for us to see, feel, taste, and smell the gospel. In this meal, we remember Christ's atoning death and glorious resurrection as we wait with eager expectation for his return.

MEMORIZE & MEDITATE Mark 8:34-35

PRAY

Thank you, God our Father, for raising Jesus up, loosing the pangs of death by the power of the Holy Spirit because it was not possible for Christ to be held by death. Amen.



**WHO IS JESUS?
HOW DO I FOLLOW HIM?**

These two questions resound through the Gospel of Mark. Jesus is king. He has all authority. He is the exalted Son of God, the long-awaited Christ. Yet, he is the most unexpected king, for he conquers through his own suffering and death. His kingship demands a response. We are to turn to him in faith. We are to follow the king.



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