### DEVOTE YOURSELF:



part 2

READ. THINK. PRAY.

### <u>CONTENTS:</u>

Mk. 8:31-9:1

Mk. 9:2-13

Mk. 9:14-29

Mk. 9:30-37

Mk. 9:38-50

Mk. 10:1-12

Mk. 10:13-31

Mk. 10:32-45

Mk. 10:46-52

Mk. 11:1-11

Mk. 11:12-19

Mk. 11:20-25

Mk. 11:27-33

Mk. 12:1-12

Mk. 12:13-17

Mk. 12:18-27

Mk. 12:28-34

Mk 12:35-13:2

Mk. 13:3-23

Mk. 13:24-37

Mk. 14:1-11

Mk. 14:12-21

Mk. 14:22-25

Mk. 14:26-31

Mk. 14:32-42

Mk. 14:43-52

Mk. 14:53-65

Mk. 14:66-72

Mk. 15:1-20

Mk. 15:21-41

Mk. 15:42-47

Mk. 16:1-8

Mk. 16:9-13

Mk. 16:14-20

Appendix



**READ**: Mark 8:31-9:1

**THINK**: Sometimes we catch ourselves thinking about what a powerful or loving God would do and disconnect that power and that love from who God has revealed Himself to be. We say, "If God was really powerful he would..." or "If God was really loving he would..." But abstract ideas are not how we know God. We know God when God reveals himself. So when Jesus predicted His humiliating death, and Peter thought "A powerful God wouldn't..." he fell into the same trap we do of thinking we know God better than He knows Himself. Jesus is who He is, and we cannot make Him more likeable or understandable. His power is shown in weakness. His love can be knowin in both mercy and judgement. Jesus promises that the coming of His kingdom in power has already been seen, and possibly can still be seen today. What kind of power should you be looking for from God?

**PRAY**: for God to show you what his power and love are like.



**READ**: Mark 9:2-13

THINK: The book of Mark continually wrestles with the combination of power and suffering in Jesus. Normally, those two don't really go together. Powerful people use their power to avoid suffering, but not Jesus. Somewhere in the end of Ch. 8 and beginning of Ch.9, this first half that focuses on power meets the second half focusing on suffering.

So far we have come to understand Jesus' miraculous power, His teaching with authority, and His ability to thwart political, religious, and spiritual enemies. From here on out, Jesus will predict his death more often, emphasize his suffering more often, and walk boldly towards his own humiliation on the cross. Yet even in his suffering, even in his weakness, we are reminded that this is the beloved son of God and we are to listen to Him. He is both the GodMan we see transformed on the mountain top, and the ManGod we see being betrayed, dying, and abandoned. How do you balance Jesus's strength and suffering?

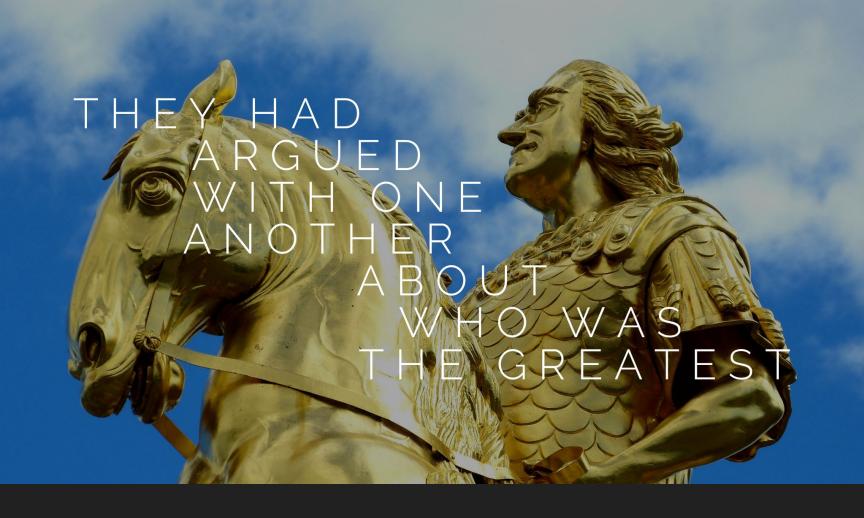
**PRAY**: for the Spirit to help you listen to and follow.



**READ**: Mark 9:14-29

**THINK**: One of the best questions to ask of Scripture is "Is this a story or a promise?" This question helps us figure out if what we are reading is a retelling of what God has and CAN do again, or is it a promise of what God WILL do every time. This man's son is possessed and seizing and Jesus seems to connect his healing to the faith of the father saying, "All things are possible to one who has faith/believes/trusts." It is possible to read this as a promise that if we, as followers of Jesus, have faith, God will accomplish the miraculous prayers we pray. The key to miracles then is to have more faith. It is equally possible to emphasize that Jesus doesn't say "all things will come" but "all things are possible" and to read this as a story of what God has done and can do again. As a reader of Scripture, you must discern how you should read passages like this and how you should act on them. Is this a story or a promise?

**PRAY**: for the Spirit's guidance as you discern this and other difficult passages.



**READ**: Mark 9:30-37

THINK: This is the second of three times that Jesus will predict his death and resurrection and it is the second of three times, the disciples will not understand it in the least. Jesus says, "Im gonna die and come back" and immediately afterwards, the disciples are like "Which one of us greatest, biggest, or bestest?" Mark places these moments in quick succession to show just how hard it is to grasp that we serve a Lord of power who uses his power not for himself, but to suffer for others. It is easy from the way Mark writes it to think the disciples are missing the obvious and are just a little bit dumb, but we do the exact same thing. We struggle to grasp that the life of following Jesus is not the same as the American dream of a successful career and loving family. We want Jesus to fit into the life we want and make it better, but Jesus doesn't fit into your life, you fit into His. His life comes in the shape of a suffering servant who uses His power and freedom to help others, ask yourself "Does mine?"

**PRAY**: for Jesus to help you see how you misunderstand him.



**READ**: Mark 9:38-50

THINK: This feels extreme, but it is a powerful reminder of how seriously we should take sin. When forgiveness is readily available we can easily fall into the trap of taking advantage of mercy. Who among us hasn't thought before doing something wrong "God will forgive me" and sinned knowing you would be forgiven. This is called cheap grace: believing that forgiveness and mercy have no cost so there is little reason to avoid wrongdoing. The true cost of grace, the death of our Lord, and the true severity of sin, separation from God, however tell a different story. Jesus urges us to take sin seriously because sin separates us from the right relationship with God. While you cutting off a hand or plucking out an eye won't keep you from sinning. God can be at work in your heart to root out your sinful desires that draw you away from him. Does sin feel of extreme or little importance to you?

**PRAY**: for God to be at work in your heart rooting out wickedness.



**READ**: Mark 10:1-12

THINK: Often Christians are seen as against divorce as if all we care about is that people remain in a legal binding contract of marriage. In marriage God joins two people together. This is a continual action where by choosing one another daily two people draw together and are made one. Going to a lawyer and getting a divorce is not the thing that breaks marriages. Selfishly choosing your own interests, holding onto pride instead of admitting failure, choosing to let small wounds fester, fantasizing about people who are not your spouse, grumbling instead of seeking reconciliation, being distrustful, being untrustworthy... these are things that break apart what God has joined. Christians aren't against divorce. We are for marriage: the daily ins and outs of being united to one another. Often divorce is just admitting the brokenness that has been allowed in over years. Don't be against divorce. Be for a good marriage. Take the time to encourage your spouse, your parents or friends who are married to unite themselves to one another.

**PRAY**: for a married couple.



**READ**: Mark 10:13-31

**THINK**: The child and the man could not be more different. While the child is drawn in and receives Jesus' embrace, the man is hindered from doing so by fear of losing what he has. Even though he has kept the commandments and desires to follow Jesus; his first loyalty is still to his wealth. It is hard for a wealthy person to enter the kingdom, it is hard for a powerful person to enter the kingdom, it is hard for a person who likes their life to such a degree that they would seek to maintain it over seeking to follow Jesus to enter the kingdom. Each of us have loyalties to positions and possessions that are not Jesus and on our own we struggle and fail to let go. With God however, the draw of the life that we like can we be overwhelmed by the embrace of and desire for our Lord. What do you want more than you want Jesus?

**PRAY**: For God to help you desire Him more than other things.

### WHOEVER WOULD BE FIRST AMONG YOU MUST BE A SLAVE OF ALL.

**READ**: Mark 10:32-45

**THINK**: You get the pattern by now. Jesus predicts his own death and the disciples argue over who can have the most power. They find it extremely difficult to wrap their heads around the idea of following a powerful leader without personal advantage. Jesus redefines what power looks like. In Jesus, power is used for others. This has been true since the beginning of God's relationship with Abraham, followers of God are blessed to bless others. (Gen. 12:3) Yet, throughout our history, people who follow God seek our own advantage and our own blessing. When God lived as a human on earth, He walked willingly to His own death for others. This was the way He used power and the actions of one blessed by God. For those of us who follow him, we should not expect a life of privilege and comfort. We should expect a life like His, where serving others becomes more important than our own desires. Are you ok with being a slave to others?

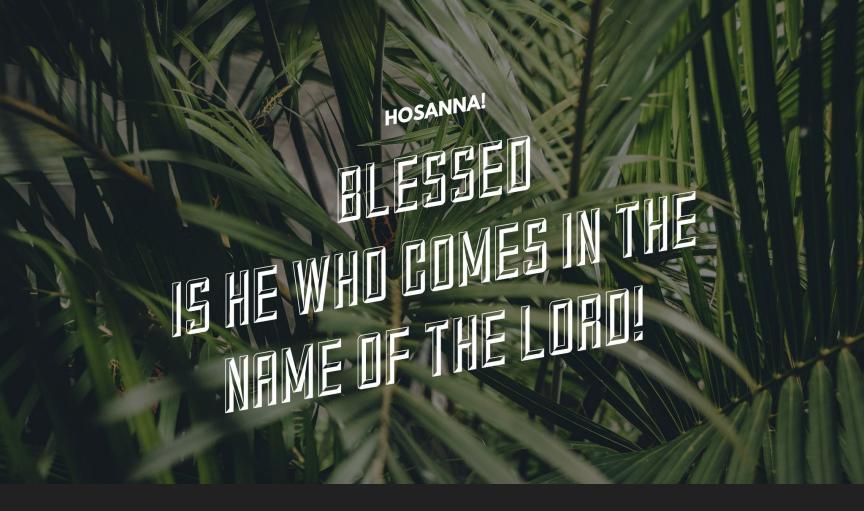
**PRAY**: for the Spirit to give you Jesus' humility.



**READ**: Mark 10:46-52

THINK: As He does elsewhere, Jesus notes that it is a person's faith that has made them well. It is unclear, though, exactly what that means. Do they have faith that Jesus can heal them? Faith that He will heal them? Faith that Jesus is the Messiah? Faith as trust in Jesus? There is clearly a connection between Jesus's decision to heal and the person's faith, but what is that faith? Some insight might be gained from the difference between the call of Jesus and the man's response. Jesus heals him saying "go on your way" but the man chooses to follow Jesus. His faith does not seem to merely be in Jesus as a powerful cosmic vending machine to gain sight from and then go back to the life he wants to lead. Instead, his faith is enacted in choosing to leave his home and follow Jesus wherever Jesus goes. Faith is less about what you can get from God, and more about getting to be with God. What does your faith look like?

**PRAY**: for a willingness to leave what you have to follow Jesus.



**READ**: Mark 11:1-11

**THINK**: It's possible that Jesus displays His miraculous powers to know that there will be colt and that the owner will give it. It is equally possible that Jesus planned ahead and is borrowing a donkey for the day. Regardless of how He gets His ride, when He arrives, people worship. Like, they really worship. They praise Jesus and shout in joy that He has come to rescue them. Normally for us, worship refers to a type of music, but it is simply an attitude toward God. Often it is expressed in song or in prayer, but it is the moment when you remember that God is actually deeply good, or really lovable, or trustworthy, or mighty, or maybe just fun and you turn to Him to say it. It's when your heart wells up from what God is doing so you naturally call out to him. When was the last time you just praised Him?

**PRAY**: "Holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full, full of your glory.

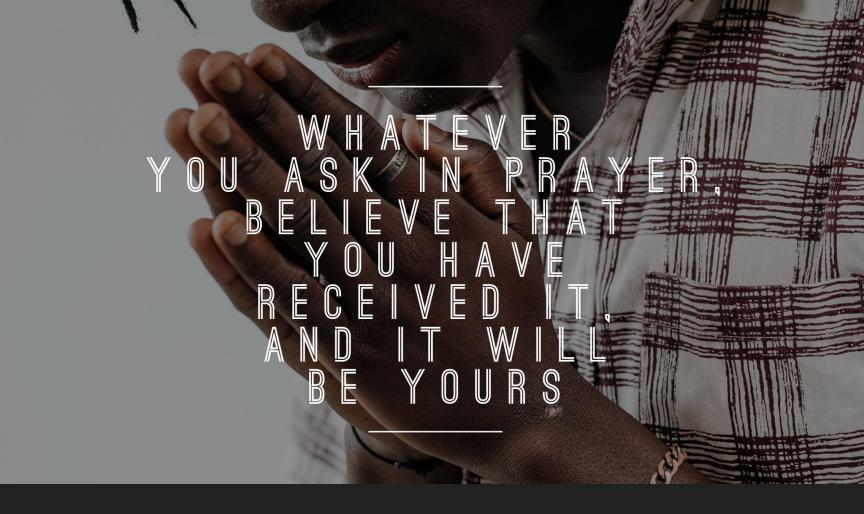
Hosanna is the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."



**READ**: Mark 11:12-19

**THINK**: It might just seem like Jesus was hangry, but there is a deeper meaning here when we connect the fig tree with the temple. Jesus comes to both the temple and the tree looking for fruit and finding none, condemns them. It is likely that these money-changers have set up shop in the outer court, the only place Gentiles can come to worship God. The temple, though, was meant to be a house of prayer for the nations (also translated "the gentiles"). The temple is FOR those who are far from God. The fruit He seeks in the temple is the nations (many diverse peoples who may seem far from God) being able to worship God. This is the fruit He desires from our churches as well. Not only the worship of the faithful, but those far from God coming to Jesus. What might change about our churches if we thought of them as a place to welcome and facilitate those who are far from God to draw close to Him?

**PRAY**: for our church to bear the fruit God is looking for.



**READ**: Mark 11:20-25

**THINK**: The lesson Jesus seems to teach from the fig tree is: "When you pray and believe God will do something, he will do it." It seems like we are given a means to control God, that if we can simply believe completely that God will do something and we have no doubt, He will do it. Frankly, this is a difficult passage for any of us who has prayed earnestly for something and it has not happened. Was the prayer not answered because you didn't believe enough? How do we believe more? Should we just convince ourselves God will do it even if we know he might choose not to? It is hard to understand this alongside ideas from Scripture like "Your will be done." Somewhere there is a balance between our faith, and God's right to choose. Surely, we cannot control Him, but surely He also answers those who believe. What do you think about this promise?

**PRAY**: For clarity as you seek to understand how to pray.



**READ**: Mark 11:27-33

**THINK**: You have to love Jesus' response of answering a question with a question. It is a power move. If the priests were simply willing to come to Jesus honestly, instead of worrying about what people would think of their answers, they would have had a chance to know him. Who knows what might have come from a conversation where Jesus revealed by what authority He flipped the tables. Maybe they would have come to follow him, maybe they would have rejected him, but they would have had a chance. Following Jesus starts by coming to Him honestly. Hiding doubts is not the same as not having them. Pretending to be faithful is not the same as being faithful. Raising questions, voicing disbelief, being honest can all be paths to knowing Jesus better. Do not be too afraid or too ashamed to be honest with Jesus. Come to him as you are, no matter what that means. What do you feel like you are hiding from Jesus?

**PRAY**: honestly with God.



**READ**: Mark 12:1-12

**THINK**: This parable is God's relationship with the Israelites:. They had followed Him, but when He attempted to lead them through prophets, they beat, rejected, and killed the prophets. When He sends His Son, they do the same. So he took them from their privileged position, allowed the temple to be torn down, and gave everyone direct access to Him through Jesus. This rejected Son is the cornerstone of the new Temple. One build not of stone and gold, but by the blood of Jesus and through the Spirit that indwells each of us. On the cornerstone of Jesus, you are the new Temple, the vineyard where the fruit of the Master grows. The story presents a chilling side of our Lord. Rebelling and bearing no fruit, the Israelites are cut off from God. We serve that same Lord. Take stock of your own faith and fruit and ask: what will the Owner of the vineyard do?

**PRAY**: for God's mercy to overwhelm your rebellion and fruitlessness.



**READ**: Mark 12:13-17

**THINK**: Firstly, you have to love that description of Jesus "true and doesn't care about anyone's opinion." This especially stands out in comparison to the Pharisees in the last couple passages who fear others' opinions. And in today's passage Jesus shares an unpopular opinion. Money has Caesar's image on it, so money belongs to Caesar. Give it to him. They are squabbling over whether they should pay their taxes or not, and Jesus essentially says "Who cares, all money is Caesar's, so give it to him." He then takes it one step further. Give to God what is God's. Jesus doesn't care about money made in Caesar's image, but people made in God's image. Do not concern yourself with the percentage of your money that you give up in taxes, concern yourself with the percentage of yourself that you give to God. In comparison to giving yourself to God and helping others give themselves to God, Money is barely important enough to discuss. How are you made in God's image?

**PRAY**: for the Spirit's peace to be concerned less with money and more with people.

# FOR WHEN they rise from the dead, THEY NEITHER MARRY NOR are given in marriage

**READ**: Mark 12:18-27

**THINK**: Seeking to trap Jesus, the Sadducees contrive a circumstance so convoluted, that no one could figure out who is married to whom. "See there can't be a resurrection," they think, "because it's impossible to know who her husband would be." Jesus, like always, does not play his questioners game. Instead, He shares a tidbit about the resurrection we have never really come to grips with. Marriage isn't forever, it's until you are resurrected. When Christ returns, and makes a new heaven and a new earth, and resurrects each of us into new physical bodies on that earth, people won't be married. We won't get married. Marriage is a relationship on earth where we get a taste of what it can be like to be truly united with God, but once we are well and truly united with Him we will have no need of it. How do you feel about marriage not being forever?

**PRAY**: for relationships on this earth which give you a taste of what it's like to be united with God.



**READ**: Mark 12:28-34

**THINK**: Love God. Love people. That's the totality of faith. We love God by devoting ourselves to him and worshipping Him. We love people by connecting with them and serving them. With everything we have, we are to love God, and we are to love people as much as we love ourselves. Agreeing to this, the scribe is told he is not far from the kingdom. "Not far" is both encouraging and discouraging. It means he is close, but it also means he isn't there yet. This man, who knows God through Judaism and has not given his life to Christ, is so close to the kingdom, yet close is not enough. Knowing the right answers about faith is not the same as living it out. Bible study, sermons, lectures, books, are all great ways to know God better, but knowledge only gets you close. We must actually love God and love people to be a part of the kingdom of God. How close are you to the kingdom?

**PRAY**: for God to grow love in you.

## BUT SHE OUT OF HER POVERTY HAS PUT IN EVERYTHING SHE HAD, ALL SHE HAD TO LIVE ON.

**READ**: Mark 12:35-13:2

**THINK**: The scribes, like the Sadducees and Pharisees, seek to trap Jesus in lofty scriptural interpretations. Jesus, however, cares little for their lofty interpretations or lengthy prayers. All their study matters less than a penny the widow gives to God. Worse, it draws them away from God because it puffs them up whereas the widow gives not in haughtiness, but in faithfulness. God isn't impressed by how much you know, he is not swayed by how much you give, he is never dazzled by how poetic your prayers are. He cares little for those things that humans see as impressive. Instead, he is awed at the gift of a single penny given in love because it was a gift of surpassing worth to the woman. The great things we do to be remembered, the beautiful things we own and build to look good will all pass away, love for God alone endures. What about you impresses God?

**PRAY**: for unassuming examples of faith like the widow to learn from.



**READ**: Mark 13:3-23

**THINK**: It seems like every 20 years or so, someone is like "This is it, Jesus is coming back this year, look at the signs." The difficulty is that all of these things that Jesus says will happen, have happened. Likely, this abomination of desolation was the destruction and desecration of the temple in year 70. This would mean that we have been in the end times for almost 2000 years. In that time, the world has been broken by seemingly insurmountable problems, wars, hatred, climate change, racism, abuses of every kind and Christians continually live in tension of how to deal with these realities. Yes, only Jesus coming back can ever set them right. This does not, however, absolve us from any responsibility to act while we wait on Him. Someday, God will remake the world to be perfect again, but until that day, we are called to make the world we have more like the kingdom of God. What can you do now that might affect a big problem?

**PRAY**: for wisdom, strength, courage, and energy to work towards the good of others and our world.



**READ**: Mark 13:24-37

THINK: It has been a long wait. For 2000 years, christians have remained on guard and awake to see the Lord return. Though it has been a long time coming, it is coming. It is easy to fall into the rhythm of going to church, reading your Bible, praying, trying to be a better person, and feeling like that is all there is to faith. We are, however, in the middle of a large story that God is enacting in history. Jesus' actions in history have shaped and will shape the world. He created, He came, He died, and He rose. Each of those shaped the world and those in it. When He comes again, He will again impact the world and remake it fully in His image.

On that day we will live fully and only in His kingdom. The ways of the world, will be the ways of our God. Kindness, joy, and love will permeate all things. This is your hope. Stay awake, for any day, God might return and fix this world. How often do you hope for Jesus' return?

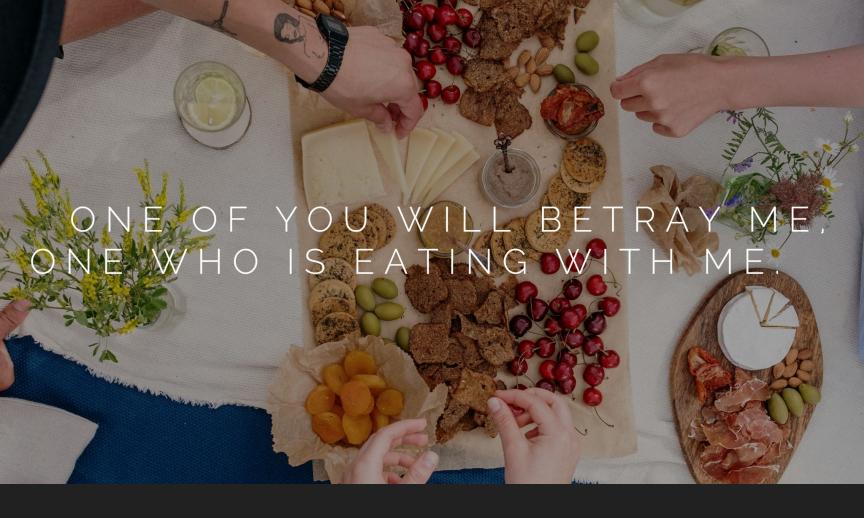
**PRAY**: for Jesus to come back.



**READ**: Mark 14:1-11

**THINK**: Mark places stories alongside one another to draw out emphasis, often arranging them in a sandwich. In the two pieces of bread, the Pharisees make a politically shrewd decision to delay Jesus' death to avoid unrest and Judas exploits his relationship with Jesus to make extra money. In the sandwich meat, the woman shows no savviness, only devotion. The bread surrounds this story by scheming and shows Jesus to be in imminent danger. Mark plays the worldly wise and faithless decisions of the outer stories against the faithful and seemingly irresponsible decision of the woman to raise her up. She takes full advantage of the presence of Christ to give to him lavishly. Jesus doesn't judge an action by its fiscal responsibility or its effective use of funds, he sees its beauty. Like David dancing in an undignified manner or Daniel choosing to eat vegetables to bulk up, God appreciates actions from a devoted follower. How do you show your devotion to God?

**PRAY**: and ask Jesus what he would want from you.



**READ**: Mark 14:12-21

**THINK**: Again Jesus either demonstrates a miraculous knowledge or some strategic planning to prepare the passover celebration. In this passover though, Jesus identifies not with the Israelites, but with the sacrificial lamb. He looks out to each of his disciples as if one of them will be the knife to slay Him. For us, We have always known Judas as a betrayer, but Jesus first knew him as a friend and a follower, as a companion and a fellow worker towards the kingdom. These words from lesus are not bland and informative, but emotional and hurting. Much can be said about the agony Jesus undergoes on the cross, but in living a human life Jesus also experiences the deep loss of betrayal. What pain and anger must have been present in His voice. Our Lord lives and speaks not just from perfect knowledge, but from emotion and feeling. When you read about Jesus, do you normally think about His emotions?

**PRAY**: To know and understand Jesus in his full humanity.



**READ**: Mark 14:22-25

THINK: One of the earliest criticisms brought against Christians was not that they were judgemental or angry, but that they were cannibals. From the beginning of the church, we shared this meal where we say we eat the body and drink the blood of Jesus, and if you have never taken communion, that is a really weird thing to say. This weird meal, though, is the central image of our faith. Just like the Israelites marked their door frames with blood in the passover, we set ourselves apart by marking ourselves with the blood of Jesus. It is his sacrifice which protects us and rescues us from the decay and damnation that come from sin. Communion is the symbol of Jesus' sacrificial love, our safety in Him, the unity of Christians throughout time in sharing this meal, and the real cost of sin. That's a lot of meaning for a bit of juice and crackers. What does communion mean to you?

**PRAY**: and thank Jesus for his broken body and shed blood.



**READ**: Mark 14:26-31

**THINK**: We always think about Peter as the one who denies Jesus because he is the one who is emphasized in the gospel narratives, but he is not alone in his confidence nor in his abandonment. Jesus predicts that all the disciples, the sheep, will leave him and all of them say they will not. In the end, though, all of them do. They have faithful desires that they cannot live up to. Often we are the same. It is easy to make risky faith claims before there is any risk. It's easy to sing hymns where we proclaim that Jesus is all we need and that we give it all to Him, but enacting those words is something different altogether. Faith is risky and costly. He might risk your relationships, cost you wealth, rearrange your priorities, or endanger you or your family. Despite all that, is following Jesus worth it to you?

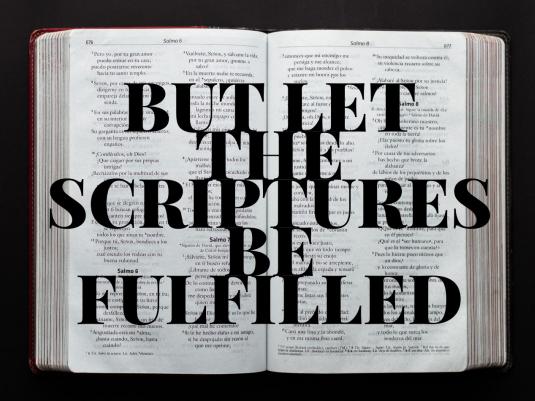
**PRAY**: though the things in your life you are unwilling to risk.



**READ**: Mark 14:32-42

**THINK**: How often have you prayed for something and not gotten your desired outcome? Has it ever made you wonder if God is actually there or if God actually cares? In this moment Jesus knows He is going to die tomorrow, knows that God can do anything, and in faith, asks God to spare him the experience of pain, humiliation, and death. Yet Jesus still suffers that pain, humiliation, and death. God didn't grant the earnest and trusting prayer of His faithful Son. God does not revel in the suffering of his Son, but it is the only way to bring about the redemption of all humankind. God doesn't desire suffering, but when there is no other way, He uses it and His will is done. God not "answering" Jesus' prayer doesn't make Him less real or less powerful. This though, raises a harder question, when you pray against it and still suffer, does that mean God desires and "wills" your suffering for a larger purpose?

**PRAY**: through some of your pain and struggles for God's will to be done.



**READ**: Mark 14:43-52

**THINK**: Jesus isn't captured by swords and clubs any more than He is kept on the cross by some nails. Jesus knows what must happen though scripture and He follows it. Jesus knew the painful path He must take and after receiving no word from God to release Him from that plan, He walks wilfully and obediently to His own death. There is an interesting faithful pattern here. Jesus does the difficult and painful thing He knows from Scripture unless God calls him away from it. Conversely, Christians can often wait to do the difficult painful action which the Bile shows to be good unless God tells us to. We are called to be generous to those in need (Lk.11:41) spread the gospel (Mk.16:19), keep from being polluted by the world (Jm.1:27) and speak for those who can't speak for themselves (Pr. 31:8). What good thing are you not doing because you are waiting for God to tell you to do it?

**PRAY**: for the courage to act on what you know boldly.



**READ**: Mark 14:53-65

**THINK**: Knowing what will happen, Jesus speaks the truth. For the first time, in public, Jesus admits who He is. Then makes a startling revelation: these men gathered will "see the Son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven." Frankly, this is a difficult statement to make sense of. We normally reserve images of power and coming from the clouds for the second coming of Jesus. These men though that He speaks to, will be long dead at this time. In what sense then can the seat of power and coming from the clouds be in the lifetime of these men. Could the cross be the seat of power where the full power of Jesus is realized in weakness? Could the seat of power refer to the resurrection where he becomes the firstborn from among the dead? Could the clouds refer to the darkness that descends at his death? What do you think Jesus means here?

**PRAY**: for God's guidance as you read scripture.



**READ**: Mark 14:66-72

**THINK**: Mark is famous for sharing stories with very little detail. When we read this, we miss Peter's emotional state, the current political climate, and the larger setting that this story takes place in. Is Peter panicking? Is there a sense of unrest and confusion surrounding Jesus's trial? Is there a lack of faith in Jesus? None of those provide an excuse for Peter's actions, but they can provide context. It is easy to look at Peter's actions and think "I would never do that," but if you were in his shoes, you very well might. Judgement is nearsighted like that. It is easy to judge others' actions from our vantage point, and say "I would never do that." If you were in their shoes though, you very well might. While context might not make sin righteous, it does make it understandable. Peter likely denied in fear for his life, can you say with certainty that you would act differently? What sins do you judge that in other people's shoes you might commit?

**PRAY**: for humility and compassion.

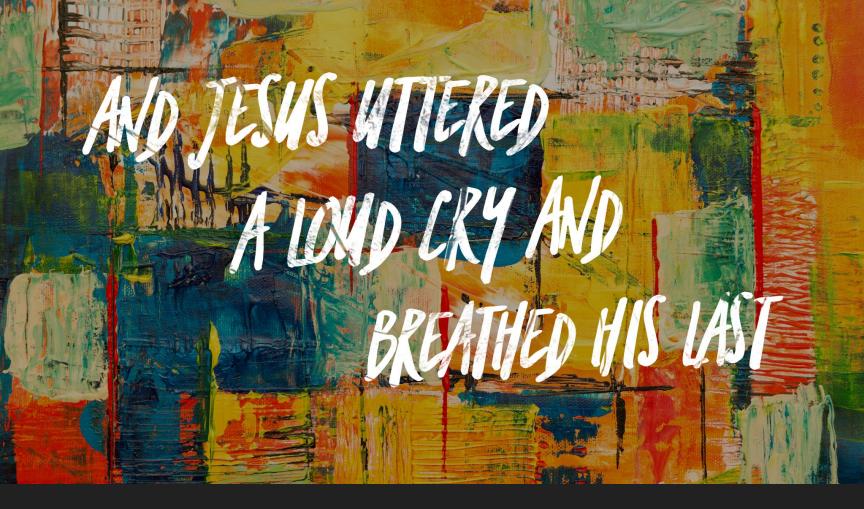


**READ**: Mark 15:1-20

**THINK**: While the religious leaders wanted Jesus dead for blasphemy, the political leaders convicted him as the "King of the Jews." Jesus wasn't just killed as a religious troublemaker, he was killed as a political insurrectionist. While he never sought an earthly throne and never claimed to be that earthly king, Jesus's claim on your life goes so deep that it competes with every other loyalty you have. Calling Jesus "Lord" was in opposition to calling Caesar "lord." His very existence represents a danger to the political desire to maintain power and the status quo, not because Christians are against the government, but because we truly only have one Lord. In serving Him, we have no desire to preserve comfort, success, or power, but only to see God's kingdom come. Your loyalty to America, your family, your career, your safety are all under attack by Jesus's claim on you.

Does that scare you?

**PRAY**: for Jesus to be your only Lord.



**READ**: Mark 15:21-41

**THINK**: Have you read that so many times that it stops feeling like a story about a person you love dying. If it was easy for you to read, read it again remembering that this is a real person who you know and love... for real, do it.

Not a joke, go do it.

Let's not add any more words here, but just hear the words preserved in Scripture again. In derision: "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." In distress: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" In faith: "Truly this man was the Son of God!" This is our Lord and brother, breathing his last, abandoned and murdered.

Glorify Him

**PRAY**: about your gratefulness for his sacrifice.



**READ**: Mark 15:42-47

**THINK**: Joseph asks for the body, and receives the corpse. The first is a respectful word for a body, the second is an undignified word for a dead thing. People have bodies, vultures eat corpses. For like 40 hours, Jesus was a corpse. From noon on Friday, to sunrise on Sunday, his corpse decayed. There are many stories surrounding what Jesus did in that time, one interesting one is that Jesus ministered to those who had died before his birth so they could accept him. Those stories, though, are simply theories. What we know is that Jesus was dead. It is just as possible that for 40 hours, He experienced nothing until He was raised to life again and reincarnated into a new body by the Father. Whatever happens when you die, which Scripture often calls being "asleep," is what Jesus experienced that day. For your salvation and for mine, Jesus felt the fullness of what death has to offer. What does His death mean to you?

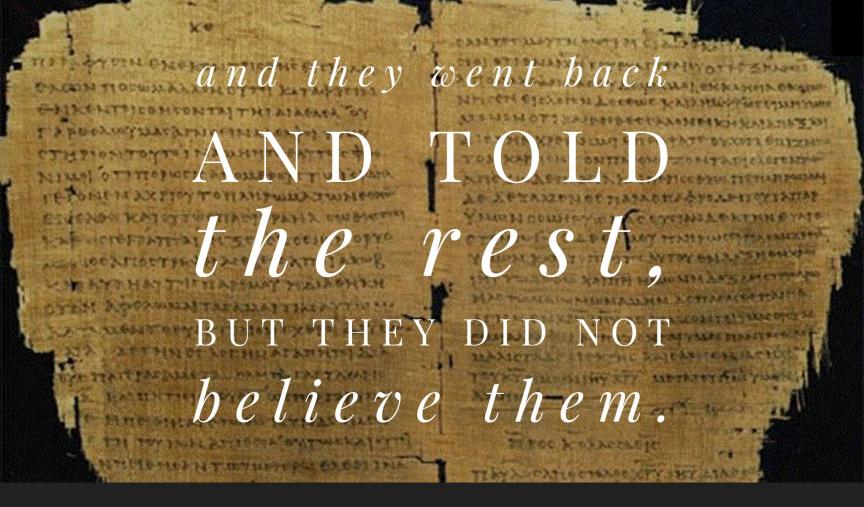
**PRAY**: for the faith to worship a God who has died.

### AND THEY SAID NOTHING TO ANYONE, FOR THEY WERE AFRAID.

**READ**: Mark 16:1-8

**THINK**: 1. Women go to the tomb. 2. Tomb is empty and Jesus is alive. 3. Women run afraid. 4. End of gospel. It is generally accepted that the women running in fear was the intended ending of Mark. This might not be how you might choose to write God's story, but it illustrates the deep reality of what happens here. These women were afraid because they met an angel, but moreover they were afraid because the world became a new place. Death is no longer final. To many of us, the resurrection is no surprise, we knew he would come back all along. In reality though, this fundamentally changes the universe. The end is no longer the end. Those who have long ago become corpses can be resurrected into a new body and live again. Jesus proves that and it is both fearful and wonderful. Do you live like this true?

**PRAY**: and thank God for changing the world.



**READ**: Mark 16:9-13

THINK: The earliest manuscripts (ie the first copies of the originally written book of Mark) do not have any of these verses. They are likely later additions when faithful scribes found the original ending of Mark lacking. They might have borrowed from other gospels or stories about Jesus or simply added their own words to Scripture. This leaves the modern reader to discern what makes Scripture the inspired word of God. Do you think this part of the Bible is still Scripture?

In this "new" ending, those who see Jesus believe, those who don't, dont. This again illustrates how unexpected and unbelievable the resurrection is. Dead people coming back does not fit into the world we know. One must then either disbelieve that people come back, or begin to redefine the shape of the world we live in. Which will you choose?

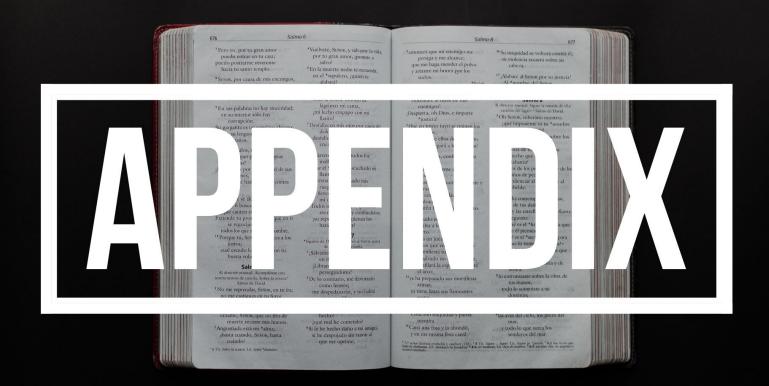
**PRAY**: that you would begin to see the world through new eyes.



**READ**: Mark 16:14-20

**THINK**: Again, these verses were not in the original book of Mark. The great commission can also be found in the book of Matthew, but the version in the later addition to Mark contains some interesting elements. Those who believe are said to cast out demons, speak in tongues, hold poisonous snakes or drink poison without harm, and heal the sick. After Jesus ascends into heaven, people preach the Gospel and through Jesus's power these things happen. Now there are churches who believe that holding poisonous snakes is a sign of faith, but none of these practices have ever made it into the mainstream Church. What then, do we make of this passage? Does it show our faith to be lacking because we cannot drink poison? Was it only for the first disciples? Is this passage not really Scripture so it has no authority? Something else? We are all in the difficult place of reading and interpreting Scripture, and the end of Mark puts us to the test.

**PRAY**: for wisdom as you wrestle with God and his word.



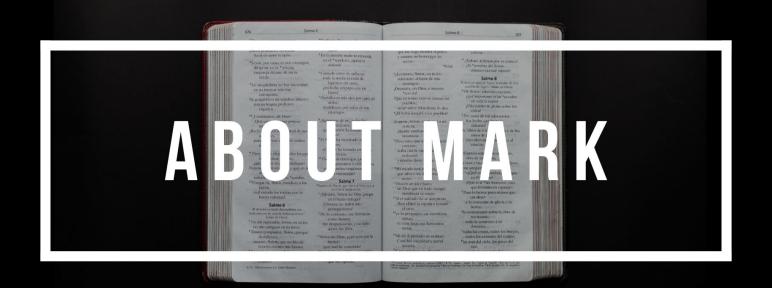
Use this appendix to guide you in your devotional reading of Mark. Below you will find some information on the book of Mark, how to make space in your day to have powerful time with God, and how to take time each week to rest and reflect.

### How to use the daily guides:

To use the guides protect time each day to do 3 things: Read, Think, and Pray. Each day is intentionally designed to encourage you to wrestle with scripture. You may find that these devotionals raise more questions than answers, that also is intentional. The goal each day read scripture and think critically about it and your own life, then to spend time in prayer with God.

Providing all the answers shortcuts the relational process of seeking God. So seek him. Read slowly, savoring scripture. Think deeply, not merely answering the question but wrestling with the passage, and pray honestly, bringing all of yourself to God.

Remember: Learning about God is only useful if you also draw close to Him.



The earliest gospel, Mark was written around year 70 by a guy named Mark and maybe a fellow evangelist with Paul (2 Tm. 4:11). It was likely written to a specific community, but is universally important for knowing Jesus and His mission to both Jews and Gentiles.

### Themes

Messiah: The Jewish savior expected to conquer.

**Power/Suffering**: Jesus is both all powerful and His life is filled with suffering for others'; rewriting Jewish messianic expectations. (and ours as well.)

**Kingdom of God**: The reign and presence of God. It is personal, communal, earthly, and heavenly.

**Fear**: The power and suffering of Jesus make people fearful and question if they should follow Him

Who is Jesus?: Mark says once who Jesus is (1:1) then shows it and different people wrestle with it. The abrupt ending invites you to wrestle too.

### Outline

### Pt 1- Coming to know the Messiah in Strength

1:1-15: Introducing Jesus: baptism and temptation

1:16-3:6: Early Ministry in authority and power

3:7-6:6: Kingdoms of God and the world at war

**6:6-8:30**: Further Ministry in authority and power

### Pt2- Coming to know the Messiah in Suffering

8:31-10:52: The disciples misunderstand 3 times

11:1-13:37: Departure from Jewish Expectations

**14:1-15:47**: The Messiah saves through suffering

16:1-8: The Messiah is raised, his followers afraid



### 1. Pick your Best Time and Space

Give God your best time, not your leftovers. Look for a time in your day when you are alert and uninterrupted. It can be helpful to find a location which feels prayerful to you.

### 2. Be Attentive to Yourself

Before you Devote, be attentive to your own heart and mind.
Are you feeling preoccupied... disappointed... resentful?
Your personal state will impact your prayer life. Make it known to God.

### 3. Be Attentive to God

This is your time with God. It is personal and relational. Jesus is listening and the Spirit is present with you. Be with God in this time. Even in silence you can know and enjoy His presence.

### 4. Read. Think. Pray.

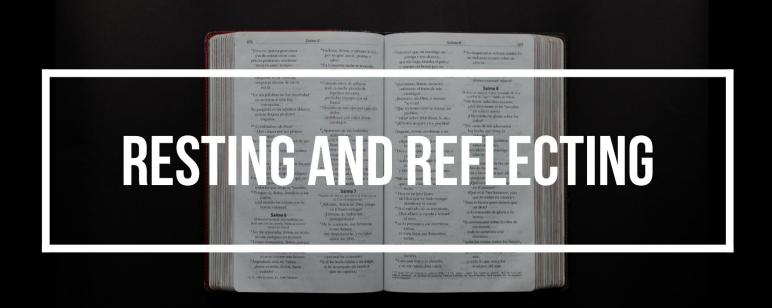
Devoting yourself to God is simple. **Read** scripture, **Think** about what it means and means to you, and **Pray** about it. This can be a time to engage your heart and mind toward God's calling. Don't rush it. Savor your time in the word and in prayer with God.

### 5. Live it Out

Now do something about it.

### 6. Rest and Reflect

Once a week instead of reading, take the opportunity to Rest with God and Reflect on His presence and power in your life. Let work take a back seat to joy and peace. Remember all that God has done for and that God is in control.



These are not practices we tend to be skilled it. Below are some pointers and ideas for how to take some R&R.

### **Pointers**

- 1. Don't Work. It can wait even if it feels like it can't.
- 2. Not all work is work. If you enjoy mowing the lawn, go for it. If you hate doing the dishes, let them "soak."3. Play. God made fun, go have some.
  - **4. Rest**. Do what you do to rejuvenate yourself: see friends, nap, go dancing, read, have a fancy dinner.
    - **5. Notice God's Presence.** God is no less present when you watch football than when you pray.
- **6. Reflect**. Protect time to journal or pray over the ways you have seen God this week. This practice helps you notice the ways God works.

### Reflect Ideas

**Realizations**: What did you learn about God? Yourself? Sin? Your community? Our Church?

**Growing Edge**: Where has God been working in your life. This can be struggles or successes

**Patterns**: Think through your time with God. Are there any themes he is drawing out?

**Conviction**: Sit with the Spirit and ask God to reveal where sin holds you back from Hid good will.

**Goodness**: Take time to just meditate on the good things in the world and in God.

Your most important mission of R&R days is simply this: Enjoy God and the life He has given you.