

# A Study of Mark's Gospel

## Week Two

Mark 1:29-2:12

### Day One

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. 32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

vs. 29&30 – Here is a subtle *immediate* 3. Right after they left the synagogue, the men with Jesus went to the house of Simon and Andrew. This tells us that the brothers were living together along with Simon's mother-in-law. Extended families lived together in those days but that isn't the point of this verse. The point is that Jesus was constantly on the move once He began His public ministry, maximizing His time and multiplying His opportunities. **We should have the same urgency as we carry out the Lord's work and will today, don't you think?**

v. 31 – Jesus took the initiative to go to the sick woman—I guess you could say He made house calls. He touched this woman, which was highly unusual for a rabbi, who could become unclean by touching a woman at the wrong time of the month. But then again, there was nothing ordinary or routine about Jesus' ministry. If I am reading this correctly, the woman got up first and *then* the fever left her. She had to do something in response to Jesus' touch and then she was healed. God touches us, we respond in faith and then our healing is made complete.

After she was healed, Peter's mother-in-law began to wait on Jesus and His entourage. She was well enough to begin working right away. While Mark didn't mention it, we see another "immediacy" here, for the woman was *immediately* healed and *immediately* went about her business of hospitality. When I see what this woman did after she was healed it makes me think of the verse in Proverbs:

Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow" — when you now have it with you (Proverbs 3:28).

**Is there any good you are putting off until tomorrow that you should be doing today? Don't wait for the circumstances to be just right or for you to feel perfect before you do the good that is within your power to do today.**

vs. 32-34 – I wonder why everyone showed up at Peter's house when they did? Perhaps the word spread about Peter's mother-in-law being healed. The whole village showed up at the home where Jesus and His team were. Why were there so many sick people in that

area? They had no medications or hospitals then, so there was no hope for the sick. I wonder if the reason why we don't see more supernatural healings today is because we have more options when we get sick and we pursue those options. We go to the doctor, clinic or emergency room. I'm not implying that any of those is inappropriate, but these people in this verse came to Jesus because they had no other option—there were no emergency rooms or doctors.

**Who is your source for healing? Even if you seek medical help, your source is and should be God. Is that the mentality you have, or do you think of God only as your healer when you have no other options?**

Notice that the demons in this verse knew who Jesus was. He had to take steps to keep them quiet because He didn't want them spreading the word. Jesus wanted the Father to reveal to people who He was and not an evil spirit.

### **Day Two**

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" 38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else — to the nearby villages — so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

v. 35 – This verse provides a wonderful glimpse into Jesus' prayer life. I find it interesting, however, that some teachers have used this and other verses to build a case that *everyone* should get up early to pray. When people hear that, often they try to do just that. When they fail, they feel like they are a unspiritual or need more discipline. **Should a mother of four get up while it is dark to pray? If she doesn't, is she unspiritual? Did Jesus do this every morning, some mornings, or on special occasions when He felt the need for such prayer?** I think you should pray when it's more effective for you, even if that is in the afternoon or evening. I also think that you should not feel condemned if you struggle with early morning prayer times.

There is no question that it is easier to pray early in the morning before you day starts along with the interruptions and busy-ness of life.

My point is that it is easy to become legalistic and put people under a heavy bondage when we insist that they have prayer and Bible time every day early in the day. **Does this sound like heresy to you when I say that? What is your pattern for your life? Have you had seasons of prayer where you have been regular and other times when you were so busy with life that you could not? Did that mean you were unspiritual or distant from the Lord? Or did it mean that you were doing God's will in such a manner that you were mindful of Him but not able to stop what you were doing to go to a solitary place?**

vs. 36&37 – So much for Jesus’ quiet time as the disciples went searching for Jesus! When they found Him, they demanded that He return to meet the needs of the many people who wanted to see Him. Jesus had already met a lot of needs, there were more to meet—that is always the case in my opinion. Jesus was accessible to the people, yet He did not let the needs of people dictate His schedule. Did this mean He didn’t care? Absolutely not! It did mean, however, that He remained sensitive to the Father’s will and let that give Him the direction that He needed.

v. 38 – When Jesus stated that He wanted to depart and go to other places, I would imagine that the disciples were surprised. They wanted Him to settle down and meet all the local needs, while He wanted to move on. This seems to me to be the same pattern that Paul followed Paul went to an area and did some good, established an imperfect church with inexperienced elders and moved on. Does that seem like a good strategy? Perhaps not to your modern mind that tells you that you must finish what you start, especially if you are doing the Lord’s work. There are people to be helped and it is irresponsible, or so the thinking goes, to turn your back on those people.

Today the phone rings, emails come in, and requests for help pour in so that it’s hard for most people not to respond. It seems, however, that this is just what Jesus did—not respond out of urgency. He responded to the Father and did not react to the needs of the people.

**Is there anything that keeps you so busy that you don’t have time to think or pray? Are you so in touch with the needs of the people around you that you are less in touch with God’s purpose for you at this time? If so, what changes do you need to make to alter this scenario?**

v. 39 – Jesus did indeed leave that area and went about teaching in the synagogues and driving out demons in all the surrounding areas. That is a curious combination of ministry activities—teaching and driving out demons. I guess when the Son of God went public, it was hard for the forces of darkness to stay around or be quiet I want that same dynamic in my life and work (I think). How about you?

### **Day Three**

40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." 41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. 43 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 44 "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

v. 40 – I don’t think we will ever be able to grasp how reprehensible leprosy was to the people of Jesus’ day. Lepers had to live apart from the rest of society for reasons of health and decorum. Why the latter? Because their flesh was literally rotting on (and

off) their bones! There was no known cure for leprosy. Once someone got the disease, there was nothing one could do, so lepers had to live outside the normal flow of society.

So this leper who came and knelt before Jesus had a lot of courage. He was willing to press past his own stench and the disdain and fear with which he was treated to kneel before Jesus and he wasn't even sure if Jesus would want to have anything to do with him! This leper had both faith and humility for he came and knelt before the Son of God. The leper knew that Jesus had the power to heal him; he just didn't know if Jesus had the stomach or will to heal him.

v. 41 – What did Jesus do? He healed the man! And how did He heal him? He touched him! Jesus touched this untouchable man! Jesus had the power and was willing because he had compassion on the man. Jesus' compassion moved Him to do what few others in His world were willing to do—have physical contact with a leper.

Notice that Jesus wasn't concerned that He would become unclean Himself. Jesus had no fear that He would contract leprosy. He was willing to heal the man and ordered the man to be clean. This is an interesting choice of words, to “be clean.” This man was considered unclean according to the Law (see Leviticus 13 and 14) yet Jesus commanded Him to be clean again. What no man could do, God did.

Of course leprosy is a symbol of the condition of man's soul through sin. That sinful condition made a man unclean, just like leprosy did. Jesus was pointing out that what man could not do for himself, whether cleaning external or internal leprosy, God could do and was willing to do through the ministry of Jesus. Thank God!

v. 42 – The man was cured immediately. It didn't take any time at all for the cleansing to manifest itself after Jesus commanded it. This reminds me of Genesis 1 and 2, where God spoke and creation was the result. When God speaks, something happens! This further reminds me of the words found in Isaiah:

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:9-11).

**Is there a “word” that God has spoken to you? If so, then you can trust that it will come to pass. It will not fail!**

v. 43 – Jesus gave the man a stern warning not to go about giving testimony of his healing until he first went to give his testimony to the priest, as required by the Law in Leviticus 14. Why? I think because leaders can sometimes be a cynical, unbelieving group. Jesus said the man had to do this to give a testimony to the priests, so they would hear about God's work through Jesus. Jesus knew that the people would have and see

plenty of testimonies about His work. In this case, He wanted the leaders to know as well.

**Do you have a testimony? Why don't you give it? Why don't you broadcast it through writing and speaking? It is your job to magnify the Lord, to take the smallest that He does in your life and magnify it so that others can see and understand it. So I ask you again: do you have a testimony?**

#### Day Four

45 Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere. 2:1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them.

v. 45 – I want to look past what this man did next and why he did it. After all, God had just healed him of an incurable disease and the leper was overwhelmed with joy. There is no way around the fact, however, that he disobeyed Jesus' stern warning to first go to the priests. We are a rebellious race, and we find it impossible to obey God on our own:

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

If any man had cause to follow Jesus' commands, this man did. He could not, however, and went about in disobedience giving a testimony about God's goodness! It seems that Jesus did not want to attract the crowds that this testimony would draw. What a difference between Jesus and the modern public figures in the church. We often do everything we can to draw a crowd in order to maximize the financial return on sales and offerings or just to fill the pews. Churches want to be mega-churches and authors want to write best sellers. There is nothing wrong with those goals, but Jesus did not drive His ministry with growth goals. His only motivation was to do the will of the Father:

By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me (John 5:30).

For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it (John 12:49).

**What is your motivation? Is it to please the Father or to please yourself? I wish I could say it is to please the Father, but even as I write this, I am challenged by Jesus' focus. I know I do things that are from a variety of motivations. Jesus was single in His motivation and that was to do God's will. Help me, Lord, to be like Jesus! Is that your prayer as well?**

vs. 1&2 – When Jesus came home to Capernaum, crowds attended His every move. Here we see that He was teaching in a house. Whose house was it? Could it have been one that Jesus owned, or was it Peter’s? The house was packed, no matter whose house it was, because people wanted to hear the rabbi who had healed a leper and done such great works. Jesus began teaching them but the people were preoccupied with His healing power.

It’s hard *not* to focus on what you need God to do for you, isn’t it? So much of my prayer and thought life focuses on what I need from God, instead of what God needs from me. I spend too much time talking to God and not enough time listening to Him. Jesus wanted to teach but the people wanted and needed Him to heal.

v. 3 – In the midst of His teaching, four men with great faith came, carrying a paralyzed man. The man could not come on his own, so his friends took it upon themselves to bring him. **Is there anyone who cannot carry themselves to Jesus that you need to bring? Who are they? Perhaps you need to bring them in prayer? Maybe you need to “carry” them to a conference or teaching session? Maybe you need to invest in some teaching recordings and give them to someone who needs them? I wish I had four friends like these four men. Better yet, may I be a friend to others like these friends were to this paralytic!**

### Day Five

4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

v. 4 – These men were creative. They would not take “no” for an answer, or accept the fact that the crowds were going to prevent them from getting their friend to Jesus. They recognized the urgency of the moment and the need of their friend, so they thought “outside the box” to come up with a solution. They dug through the roof. I can only wonder if they repaired it after they were done. These men had their priorities in order; they knew that a man’s healing was more important than an intact roof. They could repair the roof, but they could not repair their friend. Only Jesus could do that. So they did what they could do in faith so that Jesus could do what only He could do in response to their faith.

I wonder what Jesus thought when He looked up and saw what they were doing while He was teaching. Did the owner of the house try to stop them? I’m certain that they disrupted Jesus’ meeting, but it doesn’t appear that He tried to stop them or rebuked them. I like Jesus. I’m glad I am His follower.

vs. 5&6 – Jesus *saw* their faith. Remember what James wrote:

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead (James 2:17).

They believed that, if only they could get their friend close to Jesus, their friend would be healed. So they put their faith into action and dug a hole in the roof. **What do you have faith that God can do? What are you willing to do to act out that faith? What steps are you willing to take to see God act on your behalf? Remembering what these men did, come up with a plan of what you can do in the near future.**

Jesus did not say “be clean” to the paralytic like He did to the leper. In this case, He pronounced that the paralytic’s sins were forgiven. The legal experts picked up on the implications of what He said and objected in their minds, for they knew only God could forgive sins. If they were right (and they were), then this is evidence that Jesus was (and is) God, a proof of His divinity. This is also proof that the root of some sickness is sin. It didn’t seem to be for the leper, but it was for the paralytic. Was there a specific sin that caused the paralysis? Probably not. It was rather his general sinful human condition and effects of sin that led to his condition.

While we are medically and technologically sophisticated today, we should not overlook the reality that sin is at the root of all man’s problems. Man needs what Jesus has to offer—forgiveness—for without it, we are doomed to perish in our own weakened condition brought on by our inability to serve and obey God.

The leaders missed it when they didn’t question Jesus to understand what He said. They refused to learn from Him; instead, they judged Him in error. This pattern would be the same throughout Jesus’ ministry, and was the reason why so few leaders came to be His followers until Acts 6. This is another indication as to why Jesus sent the leper to the priests, so the leaders could behold evidence of what was so hard for them to believe.

### **Days Six and Seven**

8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . .  
"He said to the paralytic, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

v. 8—The leaders didn’t have courage to confront Jesus when they thought he was blaspheming. Jesus brought up the subject Himself, however, for He already knew what they were thinking.

The LORD knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile (Psalm 94:11).

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise;

you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD (Psalm 139:1-4).

This shows why you can always be honest with God—He already knows what you are thinking. Some people think, “I could never say that to God!” Yet if you think it and don’t say it, God can still judge you, for He knows your thoughts. Is there anything you need to tell God that is on your heart? Why don’t you go ahead and say it? He already knows and, if He were angry, He would have already “expressed” His anger over your thinking. Your speaking it won’t make it any worse.

v. 9 – This is more evidence that Jesus was God, for He took it upon Himself to forgive the man’s sins. Jesus tried to reason with the leaders that it was just as “easy” for Him to forgive as it was to heal. In their minds, they did not object to the healing because that was something they considered possible for a man to do. They only objected when He healed on the Sabbath. When you come to think of it, these leaders should have been jumping for joy that someone had come who could forgive sins. Their religious system, however, provide the means to cover sins or have their sins forgiven once a year. Now God was presenting a chance to have sins forgiven regularly and easily through Christ, but they objected.

Religious people don’t want anything easy from God. They want to work for their blessings. Non-religious people will take everything they can get from God, because they know that they need it all and can’t possibly earn or deserve it.

vs. 10&11 – Jesus wanted them to know that He had authority to not only heal but to forgive sins, since both sin and sickness were part of the fallen condition of man and He was their Redeemer. Jesus was willing to give a sign that He could forgive sins and that sign was healing the man before Him. The people should have rejoiced when Jesus healed this man, because it was a down payment on His desire and ability to set people free from their sins.

v. 12 – Here we have a **wow 3** in Mark’s gospel. The people were amazed when they saw the paralytic lowered into the room and then walking out of the house under his own power, carrying his mat no less! The people declared that they had never seen anything like that, and they spoke the truth! It was a remarkable day, another “wow” experience in the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth.

**When is the last time you had a wow experience serving or following God? If it’s been a while, why is that? What can you do, if anything, to position yourself for another wow?**

It does not appear that Jesus planned to have the paralytic interrupt His teaching, but He certainly went with the flow. As a result, the people saw a great thing. I need to learn to operate in this kind of flow, where I am not so uptight about interruptions and things that don’t go according to my plans. Jesus was in such a flow that He didn’t rebuke the men

who dug a hole in the roof, chastising them for both interrupting the meeting and destruction of property. Instead He followed the lead and flow of the Father and performed a great miracle.

How many miracles have I missed because I worked against this kind of spontaneous interaction? I will never know. I determine in my heart, however, to do a better job of not missing as many in the future. **What about you? Is your story the same? Do you want to be in this kind of flow? I hope you do. What can you do to cooperate with such a flow?**