



Groups

Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

NEW THIS YEAR:

As we enter this new season at Grace Chapel in search for the next Senior Pastor, we invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer for the search.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on January 7, 2024

by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson

PREPARING THE WAY – Mark 1:1-15



I. Introduction

Welcome to the first Sunday of 2024! Just to catch you up, our Christmas eve services (both in-person and online) reached 7500 people, which is a 35% increase over last year. Not only did we meet our financial goal for the month of December, but we also received over \$30,000 for the Haitian Relief offering. We ended 2023 with a bang, and we are looking forward to the possibilities of the new year both personally and in the life of our church.

Today we're beginning a new teaching series from the gospel of Mark, *Kingdom Come: When God Does Something New*. Our theme for this ministry year is *New Beginnings* – believing that God has new things in store for our lives and for Grace Chapel. We spent the fall in the book of Genesis, grounding our vision for the future by looking to the past – to God's purposes from the

very beginning of creation. Now we'll return to the New Beginnings theme, this time focusing on the beginning of the good news about Jesus, as told in the New Testament book of Mark. So for the next several weeks we are going to focus on chapters 1-3 and the new things God set in motion through Jesus.

Questions: How do we get ready to do something new?

Bottom Line: When God does a new thing, He always prepares the way by pointing to Jesus.

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

Main Scripture Readings:

Mark 1:1-15

1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, ² as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way" —

³ "a voice of one calling in the wilderness,

'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"

⁴ And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

II. **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Pastor Bryan started the message with new year's resolutions. He said that the main reason they fail is because we are not ready for the new thing, or lack of preparation. See if any members of your small group are brave enough to share resolutions from last year. Ask them on their reflections on their growth and challenges.
2. When God does a new thing, it is always good. However, the new thing may not be what we expected or what we were hoping for. Nevertheless, we can trust God to do something good in the face of setbacks, failures and trials.
 - Can you reflect of a time where you were struggling financially, relationally, physically or emotionally and were expecting/hoping for something? Looking back, how do you see God's character and activity at work? What are challenges that impact our ability to see God working?

3. Read the following Scripture:

Psalms 139:13-15

¹³For you created my inmost being;
 you knit me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body;
 all the days ordained for me were written in your book
 before one of them came to be.

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

God has been preparing you from the beginning to do something unique in this world, something good and eternally significant, and that preparation includes whatever has been happening in your life lately. Think about the following questions and write down your thoughts.

- What might that new thing be?
- What does he want you to learn or accomplish this year?
- Who does he want you to bless, or be blessed by this year?
- Where does he want you to invest your time and talent and energy this year?

Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts.

4. As you close in prayer, instead of thinking about the new thing that YOU want to do in this new year, think about what new thing THE LORD might want to do in or through you this year. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you through Scripture reading, prayer, and the words of brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus to help discern the way God wants you to go.

Take Home Message:

I don't know what your new year's resolution might be; what new thing you're hoping for in your life or home or church this year. But I believe that new thing has a better chance of becoming a reality when you invite God into the experience.

Let's Pray**III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search**

During this next ministry year as we navigate transitions, we invite you to secure time during your life group to pray over the search process. Click [here](#) to access the full resource of the prayer guide.

Prayers for Preparation of the heart

- Pray for God to reveal to you the condition of your soul or the work of God's Spirit within you, as you consider your feelings about the Senior Pastor search process.
- Prayer is not just an opportunity to make requests from God, but to listen to what God might want for us during this season of transition. Pause and listen for any invitation from God that he is asking you to enter into.

Prayers for the Purposes of God

- Pray that God will use the people of Grace Chapel in the fulfilling of his mission to further the Gospel message and for us to be people of peace and healing in a broken world.

Prayers for the People of Grace

- Pray that Grace Chapel will seek the Lord as we continue our vision to be a vibrant, growing, multicultural community of seekers and believers, discovering life with God for the good of the world. Pray that we will continue with our mission to make and mobilize more disciples for Jesus Christ in Greater Boston and beyond.

Prayers for the Person God's calling

- Pray that they will have a passion to continue the work the Lord is doing at Grace Chapel and that they will be excited about the opportunities here.
- Pray that the new pastor will have a clear vision for how to minister to the people of Grace Chapel and the surrounding community.

Prayers for Discernment

- Pray for God's clear direction in how resumes are examined and interviews conducted.
- Ask God to bring the right person to the attention of the committee.
- Pray for the Search Committee to have God's wisdom in all the questions and information they share with the prospective pastor.

IV. The Journey



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

V. **Support for the Leader**

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points:

- When God does a new thing, it's always good
- The new thing that God is doing may not be what we were expecting or hoping for
- The new thing may not be easy or comfortable. It may not be what you were expecting or hoping for, but it can be good and redemptive and eternally significant
- When God does a new thing, He always prepares the way
- When God does a new thing, He always points us towards Jesus