



Mark 5-9

Growth Groups Material

(4 studies on Mark 5-9)

Mar-Apr 2025

LEADERS GUIDE

Teaching Schedule

<i>In our gatherings we will work through an 8-part series, which spans the school holidays and includes the Easter Weekend:</i>	13-16 Mar	Mark 5:1-20
	20-23 Mar	Mark 5:21-6:6
	27-30 Mar	Mark 6:6-52
	3-6 Apr	Mark 6:53-7:23
	10-13 Apr	Mark 7:24-8:26
	18 Apr (Good Friday)	Mark 8:27-9:1
	19/20 Apr (Easter Sunday)	Mark 9:2-13
	24-27 Apr	Mark 9:14-29

Note: This material contains **4 studies, corresponding to the first 4 sermons** in the series. These 4 weeks fall within the school term, whereas the remaining 4 weeks fall within the school holidays. We anticipate that most groups will take a break during the school holidays, hence why studies for these weeks have not been written.

Booklet Contents

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Additional Resources

We've put together some additional resources that might help you as you make your way through this series:

<https://jannalianglican.org.au/seeingjesusmark>



Introduction

Is there anything more important in life than *Seeing Jesus* clearly? We don't think so. Carefully reading and reflecting on Mark's gospel will help us do just that, whatever our background, or wherever we're up to on our own faith journey.

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest and most action-packed of the four Gospels, offering a fast-paced account of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Likely written between A.D. 50–70, Mark's Gospel is believed to be based on the eyewitness testimony of the Apostle Peter and was recorded by Mark, who was a companion of both Peter and Paul.

Broadly speaking, the book has two halves, all aimed at the one purpose of showing that Jesus is the Christ (c.f Mark 1:1), who suffers for our sin. In the first half (1:1-8:26), Mark is intent on showing Jesus' identity as the Christ (God's promised King). In the second half (8:27-16:8), the book focuses on Jesus' mission: the need for Jesus to suffer and be rejected for our sin. In these studies we pick up the story in the second part of the first half. We'll encounter unequivocal evidence of Jesus' divine identity, as he demonstrates his authority (over demons, nature, sickness, even death) time and time again. We'll also see people's mixed reactions as they come to grips with who Jesus is. Both good and bad reactions.

Will you see Jesus for who he really is? What is your answer to the disciples' famous question after they had just seen Jesus calm the storm: "Who then is this?" (Mark 4:41). For some of us, asking this question again might feel like we're covering old ground. But do take the opportunity to be moved *afresh* as you see again the power, the compassion, the beauty and the trustworthiness of our Lord in the pages of Scripture.

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Note for leaders:

- Leaders' notes look like this (dot point, grey shading)
- Please refer group members to the QR code on page 2, if they would like to explore further resources.
- As usual, please don't feel compelled to do every question. I encourage you to tailor the study to suit your group.

Study 1 | Mark 5:1-20 (members book page 4)

Introduction

1. Can you describe a time when you have felt powerless or trapped (e.g. in a difficult situation that you were unable to change). How did this make you feel?

- This is a broad and open question designed to get people talking. It raises an area of common ground we might have with the demon-possessed man described in these verses.
- You might also like to start the series by reviewing or recapping Mark 1-4, and especially Mark 4:35-41. The question posed by the disciples in verse 41 is a deliberate strategy by Mark to have his readers asking the same question.

Read and Discuss

2. Read Mark 5:1-20. To help you observe what's happening, have a go at drawing a picture of one of the scenes in this passage.

- This will suit those with more visual learning styles. It's really a way of helping people get their noses in the text and reading it carefully. Go easy on people – if they anything like me (James) their standard of drawing will be questionable. Others might be really good.

3. What does Mark emphasize about the man who lived amongst the tombs?

- There are few repeated words which give us some insight into what Mark's emphasizing.
- First is the use of the word 'tombs'. It comes up several times. This is a man (like all of us) living under the shadow of death. Even though his circumstances are very different to ours, he is symbolic of us all....under the power of sin/death, and unable to escape it.
- The other emphasis is on how it has proved impossible for anyone else to restrain the man. This is setting us up to appreciate the extraordinary authority that Jesus is about to demonstrate.

4. What do we learn about Jesus and his power over evil spirits/demons?

- We learn that Jesus name and identity is already known in the Spirit world (v7).
- We see Jesus' power to command evil spirits (even a group of them – Legion) and they obey.
- The notion of evil spirits possessing people might feel strange to us, in our Western world. In other parts of the world, this phenomenon wouldn't raise an eyebrow. For us, if we believe in God (who is Spirit) and Satan, the existence of other spiritual beings (e.g. angels and demons) shouldn't bother us. Nor would it surprise us to learn of their active efforts to protect (in the case of angels) or harm (in the case of demons) God's people. The trick here is not to become fixated on this part of created existence that remains mysterious to us but rather appreciate Jesus clear supremacy over all spiritual beings.

5. What was the response of the locals to what had happened? What is unusual about it?

- The response of the locals is unusual insofar as they become afraid once they see the demon-possessed man sitting in his right mind (v15). You would expect they would have feared him more when had been possessed, compared to now, after he's been healed.
- Mark is likely continuing to build his theme that people who encounter Jesus are becoming afraid of him – because they've never seen anything like his power. This was the same after the calming of the storm (Mark 4:41 – the disciples were terrified) The locals begged Jesus to leave their region (v17).

6. What is the response of the formerly demon possessed man. How does he model the right response to us?

- This man begs to stay with Jesus. That seems fitting, when Jesus has just completely changed your life for the better. Do we long to know Jesus better and spend more time with him (in prayer and reading Scripture)?
- Upon Jesus instructions the man tells people about what Jesus had done for him? That should be our goal as well.

Reflect and Apply

7. At the start of this part of Mark, the disciples ask a question which should shape our response to what we read (across chapters 5-8). After Jesus calms the storm, they ask: *“Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”* (Mark 4:41). What answers to that question do we get in the current passage?

- This same question will appear as the first application question in each of the 4 studies. It’s an appropriate question to ask as it’s the question Mark is putting to his readers.
- For some people who are already Christians, this will feel like a redundant question – they have already come to recognize who Jesus is. Encourage these people not to progress too quickly beyond such a fundamental, faith-forming process. The bigger view we have of Jesus, the more moved we will be to serve him, and the more our fears in life will subside.

8. What do you have in common with the demon-possessed man? What has Jesus done for you? Who can you tell about it?

- Clearly, on the face of it, it looks like we have little in common with the man in this scene. But think hard. One possibility might include: our spiritual enslavement to sin – that is apart from Jesus we’re captive to Satan. You might like to read Ephesians 2:1-3 or John 8:34, which both describe our spiritual condition apart from Jesus.
- Have a go at summarizing what Jesus has done for you in a compelling way. This will obviously look and sound different to the man from the tombs. But can we describe our salvation in such a way that people we tell will appreciate the significance of it?

9. Is it right to be afraid of Jesus? Are you afraid of him? What kind of fear of Jesus is healthy/unhealthy?

- For discussion. The contrast between fear and faith features heavily in these chapters of Mark.
- A healthy fear of Jesus is the natural and right response to recognizing his divine identity. However, it ought to lead to trust and service.
- The fear exhibited by the townspeople in the passage, and their corresponding begging for him to leave are both examples of an unhealthy fear of Jesus.

Study 2 | Mark 5:21-6:6a (members book page 7)

Introduction

1. What things in life are you most afraid of?

2. How do people tend to deal with fears these days?

- Here are two related open questions for discussion. The stories of sheer desperation in the passage for today ought to engage our emotions. The aim of these questions is to begin engaging with those emotions. The more we can put ourselves in the shoes of these characters, the more we'll marvel and appreciate what Jesus does for them (us).
- To state the obvious: speak carefully about different fears people might raise, thanking them for being vulnerable, rather than trying to 'correct' or help them.

Read and Discuss

3. Read Mark 5:21-43. What do we learn about each person and their need? Put yourself in their shoes. What words might you use to describe their state of mind?

- This is a straight-forward comprehension question.
- Some things you might notice (this is not an exhaustive list):
 - a. Jairus is a synagogue leader – normally someone who has lots of power and privilege – but here, he helpless
 - b. The woman has exhausted all earthly options for addressing her condition. Medicine can't help her.
 - c. The woman's condition (and bleeding) would have meant she was 'unclean' according to the law, and therefore likely experienced social isolation for many years.
 - d. The delay which transpired for Jairus, as Jesus dealt with the bleeding woman. Imagine his agony, while waiting, as his daughter was on the cusp of death.

- Asking to put words to their state of mind helps us identify with the characters. A different way of asking the question could be: “If you were in their shoes, how would you feel?”

4. What response to Jesus is Mark promoting through Jesus’ own words in this section?

- In relatively quick succession, first to the women, in verse 34, and then to Jairus in verse 36, Jesus says very similar things to each person.
- “Daughter your faith has saved you” and “Don’t be afraid. Only believe”
- The key to accessing Jesus saving power is faith. This is not saying that it’s our actual faith which saves us, and that we need to ensure we have enough faith, etc. It’s faith which causes us to call upon Jesus. He is the powerful one, and our faith draws us towards him.

5. Read Mark 6:1-6. This feels very different to what has happened in chapter 5. How do the people in Jesus’ hometown respond to him? Why do you think Mark includes this section?

- The response to Jesus here is much more cynical. They do not recognize him for who he is.
- Mark probably includes this section to remind us that there are different responses to Jesus. It’s possible to reject him (although not advised).
- As for the odd comment that Jesus was *not able* to perform miracles. This is unlikely to be an assessment of some deficiency in Jesus, as if his powers had stopped working. Rather, it’s probably more a reflection on the unbelief of the people (c.f, Matt 13:57)

Reflect and Apply

6. At the start of this part of Mark, the disciples ask a question which should shape our response to what we read (across chapters 5-8). After Jesus calms the storm, they ask: *“Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”* (Mark 4:41). What answers to that question do we get in the current passage?

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7. Jesus doesn’t promise that he will heal us from our assorted illnesses and health conditions. But he does promise life beyond death. Death is our great enemy that no-one can stop! How does Jesus power over death comfort us?

- For discussion. There is great relief and joy knowing that just like the little girl, Jesus can and will bring us to new life after death.

8. This passage (along with the last few passages in Mark) frequently contrast fear and faith. One commentator describes Mark's main point as this: *"Jesus is bigger than the things you're afraid of. Trust and fear him instead."* What do you make of this summary? When would it be helpful to remember this truth?

- For discussion.
- This quote links back to the introductory questions. It's a remarkable truth that Jesus is bigger than our biggest problems. In the thick of our fears and challenges, it can be easy to forget that, or to know how to draw upon the comfort this truth offers.
- I've found the follows words from one commentator, helpful in capturing the personal dynamic we're aiming for:

Imagine you are catching the ferry back from Belgium after a weekend full of moules-frites and waffles. The name of the ship is the Herald of Free Enterprise. As the water starts to pour through the windows, you realize you might die, and you're a little nervous, to say the least. But because you're a Christian, you are spared the utter terror that grips others on board. You believe in a Saviour who can even get you through death, if it comes to that.

Imagine you are in a hospital waiting room, where the only thing to read is a pile of Country Life magazines, and you've been through all of them twice. Your daughter has been in surgery for hours. As the doctor approaches with a grave expression on her face, you're a little nervous, to say the least. But because you're a Christian, you are spared the utter terror that grips others in the waiting room. You believe in a Saviour who can even get your daughter through death, if it has to come to that.

(from Dig Deeper into the Gospels, Andrew Sach and Tim Hiorns, IVP 2025)

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Study 3 | Mark 6:6-52 (members book page 12)

Introduction

1. What attributes make a leader worthy of following?

- Open question for discussion. One of the things Mark is doing in chapter 6 is contrasting Jesus with Herod, the King of Judea.

Read and Discuss

2. Read Mark 6:6-29. What do these verses describe? Is Herod an attractive or unattractive character? What are his strengths and weaknesses?

- Notice we've skipped over verses 7-13 in the questioning. They set the scene for the account of Herod and John the Baptist which follows. Verses 17-29 are a flashback to an earlier period.
- On the one hand Herod is to be commended because he feared John the Baptist, protected him, and liked listening to him. On the other hand, the flaws in his character are many. He never repented of his sin (marrying his brother's wife), he had John arrested, and in the key moment he allowed for John to be killed so as not to lose face before his guests.
- Here is a leader (a 'King of the Jews') who was completely self-seeking.

3. Read Mark 6:30-44. What elements of Jesus' character does Mark emphasize?

- The main verse in which Jesus' character is described is verse 34 – he had compassion towards the people.
- Ofcourse, Jesus actions also show his loving concerns to provide for the crowds. He uses his power to meet their needs. And he does so abundantly – after eating they were all satisfied (verse 42).

4. Read Mark 6:45-52. What stands out to you from this scene?

- For open discussion. This is really just about reading this section prior to question 5, which touches on both the feeding scene, and the walking on water scene.
- The thing that stands out to me (James) is the way Mark comments on the disciples at the end (verse 52) – *they had not understood about the loaves. Instead their hearts were hardened.* Perhaps this refers to the disciples failing to recognize Jesus as being God himself – something which ought to have been obvious from the feeding of the 5,000? It's an intriguing comment.

5. In the *feeding of the 5,000* and *walking on water* scenes Mark might be alluding to some parts of the Old Testament. Skim read Exodus 14-16. What events happen in these verses? What common features do you notice between those chapters and the current passage? What point might Mark be making by these allusions?

- These chapters demonstrate God's absolute power over nature and the way he uses it for the good of his people. Verse 14 is the account of the parting of the red sea. Verse 16 is the account of God providing manna and quail to feed the Israelites in the wilderness.
- There are parallels in the kind of power Jesus demonstrates. He exerts power over water, by walking on it, and he supernaturally provides food for the people.
- Two other features which might be less obvious are:
 - The location of the feeding of the 5,000. The use of the language 'remote place' and 'deserted' (in the CSB translation) is deliberate (verses 31, 32, 35). In each case it is the same word for wilderness used in Exodus 16.
 - When Jesus speaks to the disciples after he has walked on water (verse 50), his words 'It is I' is the same as the famous 'I AM', the name God reveals to Moses in Exodus 3.
- Mark is making the point that Jesus is none other than God himself. The God of Israel already revealed in the Old Testament, and especially in well known salvation history moments like the Exodus.

Reflect and Apply

6. At the start of this part of Mark, the disciples ask a question which should shape our response to what we read (across chapters 5-8). After Jesus calms the storm, they ask: “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!” (Mark 4:41). What answers to that question do we get in the current passage?

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7. Herod enjoyed listening to John the Baptist but wasn’t willing to repent of his sin (marrying his brother’s wife). How is the example of Herod a warning to us not to ‘sit on the fence’ when it comes to our response to Jesus?

- For discussion. It can be easy to think well of Jesus and yet never fully surrender our lives to him. Perhaps you know people in that category.

8. How is Jesus being contrasted with Herod? What qualities did Jesus exhibit that Herod didn't? How might our understanding of Jesus' character (in addition to his authority that we've seen in the last few weeks) help us to trust and follow him?

- It seems deliberate that Mark has situated the two accounts of leadership alongside each other to make a point. His point is to show us how Jesus is the selfless, loving compassionate King that the Jews (and all of us need).
- This helps us to trust him because we can be sure that Jesus uses his power for our good.
- The repeated reference to people being afraid of Jesus over the last few chapters is natural, but Mark wants to dismantle our fear. When we encounter someone of supreme power or very high office, and can be intimidating. In life we're accustomed to people with lots of power using it for their own ends. BUT Jesus isn't like that! He can be trusted to use his power for good.
- This is an irresistible combination – supremely powerful and supremely good. Why wouldn't you put your trust in a king like this?

Study 4 | Mark 6:53-7:23 (members book page 15)

Introduction

1. How would you define the concept of 'sin'?

- The tone shifts in chapter 7. Perhaps again, Mark is contrasting Jesus loving leadership with the corrupt current leaders (chapter 6- Herod, chapter 7 – the Pharisees).
- In any case, a discussion of sin will help the group begin to engage with the issues Jesus teaches on in this chapter.
- The notion that Jesus will challenge in his teaching is that sin is only a matter of rule breaking, which can then be addressed by implementing a rule keeping solution.

Read and Discuss

2. Read Mark 7:1-23. What had Jesus' disciples done that the Pharisees and Jewish leaders were concerned about?

- The Pharisees had observed that the disciples had eaten bread with unwashed hands. This was less about hygiene, and more about following a tradition). Marks explanation in verses 3-4 is included especially for people like us who weren't familiar with the Jewish customs.

3. How does Jesus respond to the Pharisees?

- Jesus goes on the attack – he calls out the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. On the surface they do the right things, but their hearts are not in it.
- Jesus quotes from Isaiah 29:13. Isaiah 29 is a pronouncement of Woe (judgment) against the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
- Jesus then backs up his claim by using a specific example of hypocrisy concerning the *Corban* practice. There had been a legal/temple rule developed by the Pharisees whereby money which might have been rightfully directed to one's parents was set aside and devoted to the temple, if they declared it 'Corban' (the word means devoted to God). By this rule the Pharisees were actually undermining the command to honour one's father and mother.

4. Have a go at putting Jesus' words in verses 14-23 into your own words?
What common error is Jesus correcting?

- Encourage the group to put these verses in their own words. This will help them read the text closely and try to understand it, before paraphrasing.
- The error being corrected is a misunderstanding of sin as being an external religious category (that could be managed with particular rules and ritual practices), rather than a disease of the heart – our corrupt nature.

Reflect and Apply

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6. Think about your own life, or the life of a potential Christian believer? What would be the signs of a 'hypocritical', 'surface level' Christianity? What would be the signs that someone has been truly changed on the inside and is genuine in their faith?

- For discussion. Invite the group to ponder what a modern-day Pharisee might look like in a Christian context?
- Perhaps, rather than the ceremonial washing rules, we might have our own tick-box markers of what we need to do to be right with God.
- Maybe for some people it's attending church on Sunday, and/or giving money. To be clear- these are good things, but we can imagine people going through the motions of doing these things without ever giving a thought to God in the rest of their life, or exhibiting a desire to know him and to grow in godliness.
- The crucial issue is a right understanding of the source of our sin problem, and who/how this can be fixed. So many religions still operate on the premise that our sin (our standing with God) can be carefully managed and put right by our religious practices.

7. Imagine you're reading through Mark with an unbelieving friend and they've enthusiastically agreed with everything so far... e.g "There is no-one like Jesus....he has power over everything....he really must be God!". However, they're not convinced yet to put their trust in him. How could a chapter like this push your friend closer towards real, saving faith?

- For discussion. It seems as if many people don't fully appreciate their need for Jesus because of their sin. Either they believe in the category of sin (and the need to get right with God) but they default to the religious or moralistic solution and think that it's in their control if they live as a good person and tick the right religious boxes. Others might not believe in the category of sin at all, and that they have a need before God which needs addressing.

Praying for our *life boat lists* (members book page 18)

We know that everyone's greatest need in life is to be reconciled with God through Jesus so that their sins can be forgiven. We want lost people to be saved, and know the eternal hope of salvation, rather than perish under God's judgment.

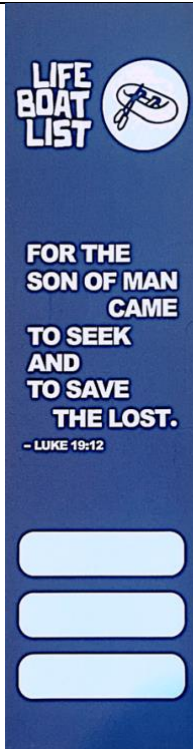


In our church gatherings of **27-30 March** we heard more about our Connect plans at church. That is, what we're doing together as a church to reach people and connect them to Christ. At the heart of our efforts is to be identifying unbelievers in our lives that we want to see saved and praying diligently for them, and our own efforts to share Jesus with them.

A tool we use to help us pray regularly is our *life boat list*. These are bookmarks upon which we can list three people that we're deliberately praying for and actively working towards sharing Jesus with.

In our groups, it would be excellent to share with each other who is on our life boat lists, and pray together for each of these people, and our efforts to reach them.

You might like to use the next page record the name of the people you are praying for.



Praying for our *life boat lists*

Group Member	Life boat list

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