



Week One: Mark 1

“Make Room for Jesus”

Reading and Study Guide for the week of April 16-23, 2023

Memory Verse: *Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34)*

This week, read Mark 1:1-45. On Sunday, April 16, Pastor John will preach on the theme “Make Room For Jesus” (Mark 1:1-8). John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus’ arrival. We must make room for Jesus in our own lives to join Him in His Kingdom work.

Some questions to answer and think about this week with your family or Community Group:

1. How would you prepare for a home visit from your boss or another important person?
2. What do Mark’s first words tell us about his Gospel? ([1:1](#))
3. Who was John the Baptist? Who sent the messenger? Why? ([1:2-3](#))
4. What were the two aspects of John’s ministry? ([1:4](#))
5. What had to happen before John could baptize a person? ([1:5](#))
6. What was the theme of John’s message? ([1:7-8](#))
7. How did Jesus’ baptism differ from John’s? ([1:8](#))
8. What does the message of Jesus offer to people?
9. In what ways can you prepare others for Christ?
10. What step could you take this week toward becoming a better witness for Christ?

Life Application Bible Notes - Mark 1:1-8

[1:1](#) When you experience the excitement of a big event, you naturally want to tell someone. Telling the story can bring back that original thrill as you relive the experience. Reading Mark’s first words, you can sense his excitement. Picture yourself in the crowd as Jesus heals and teaches. Imagine yourself as one of the disciples. Respond to his words of love and encouragement. And remember that Jesus came for us who live today as well as for those who lived 2,000 years ago.

[1:1](#) Mark was not one of the 12 disciples of Jesus, but he probably knew Jesus personally. Mark wrote his Gospel in the form of a fast-paced story, like a popular novel. The book portrays Jesus as a man who backed up his words with action that constantly proved who he is—the Son of God. Because Mark wrote his Gospel for Christians in Rome, where many gods were worshiped, he wanted his readers to know that Jesus is *the one true* Son of God.

Without God’s revelation, our finite minds cannot comprehend the infinite. But because of what we know about Jesus (thanks to writers like Mark), we can understand what God is like. Mark gave the “punch line” of his Gospel in the very first verse, but both Jesus’ enemies and his disciples would not get it until Jesus’ resurrection. For us who read Mark today, the message is clear that we must not ignore or reject Jesus Christ.

[1:2, 3](#) Isaiah was one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. The second half of the book of Isaiah is devoted to the promise of salvation. Isaiah wrote about the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and the man who would announce his coming, John the Baptist. John’s call to “clear the road for him” meant that people should give up their selfish way of living, renounce their sins, seek God’s forgiveness, and establish a relationship with God by believing and obeying his words as found in Scripture ([Isaiah 1:18-20](#); [57:15](#)).

1:2-4 Hundreds of years earlier, the prophet Isaiah had predicted that John the Baptist and Jesus would come. Isaiah's words comforted many people as they looked forward to the Messiah, and knowing that God keeps his promises can comfort you, too. As you read the book of Mark, realize that it is more than just a story; it is part of God's Word. In it God is revealing to you his plans for human history—and offering the Good News of his salvation to you.

1:3 John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. People who do not know Jesus need to be prepared to meet him. We can "prepare the way" by explaining their need for forgiveness, demonstrating Christ's teaching by our conduct, and telling them how Christ can give their lives meaning. We can "clear the road for him" by correcting misconceptions that might be hindering people from approaching Christ. Someone you know may be open to a relationship with Christ. What can you do to prepare the way for this person?

1:4 Why does the Gospel of Mark begin with the story of John the Baptist and not mention the story of Jesus' birth? Important Roman officials of this day were always preceded by an announcer or herald. When the herald arrived in town, the people knew that someone of prominence would soon arrive. Because Mark's audience was primarily Roman Christians, he began his book with John the Baptist, whose mission it was to announce the coming of Jesus, the most important man who ever lived. Roman Christians would have been less interested in Jesus' birth than in this messenger who prepared the way.

1:4 In John's ministry, baptism was a visible sign that a person had decided to change his or her life, giving up a sinful and selfish way of living and turning to God. John took a known custom and gave it new meaning. The Jews often baptized non-Jews who had converted to Judaism. But to baptize a Jew as a sign of repentance was a radical departure from Jewish custom. The early church took baptism a step further, associating it with Jesus' death and resurrection (see, for example, [Romans 6:3, 4](#); [1 Peter 3:21](#)).

1:5 Jesus came at a time in history when the entire civilized world was relatively peaceful under Roman rule, travel was easy, and there was a common language. The news about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection could spread quickly throughout the vast Roman Empire.

In Israel, people were ready for Jesus, too, and they flocked to hear this wilderness preacher. There had been no God-sent prophets for 400 years, since the days of Malachi (who wrote the last book of the Old Testament). Anticipation was growing that a great prophet, or the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament, would soon come (see [Luke 3:15](#)).

1:5 The purpose of John's preaching was to prepare people to accept Jesus as God's Son. When John challenged the people to confess sin individually, he signaled the start of a new way to relate to God. Is change needed in your life before you can hear and understand Jesus' message? You have to admit that you need forgiveness before you can accept it. To prepare to receive Christ, repent. Turn away from the world's dead-end attractions, sinful temptations, and harmful attitudes, and turn to God. He can give you a new start.

1:6 John dressed much like the prophet Elijah ([2 Kings 1:8](#)) in order to distinguish himself from the religious leaders, whose flowing robes reflected their great pride in their position ([12:38](#)). John's striking appearance reinforced his striking message.

1:7, 8 Although John was the first genuine prophet in 400 years, Jesus the Messiah would be infinitely greater than he. John was pointing out how insignificant he was compared to the one who was coming. John was not even worthy of being his slave. What John began, Jesus finished. What John prepared, Jesus fulfilled.

1:8 John said Jesus would baptize them with the Holy Spirit, sending the Holy Spirit to live within each believer. John's baptism with water prepared a person to receive Christ's message. This baptism demonstrated repentance, humility, and willingness to turn from sin. This was the *beginning* of the spiritual process. When Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit, the entire person is transformed by the Spirit's power. Jesus offers to us both forgiveness of sin and the power to live for him.