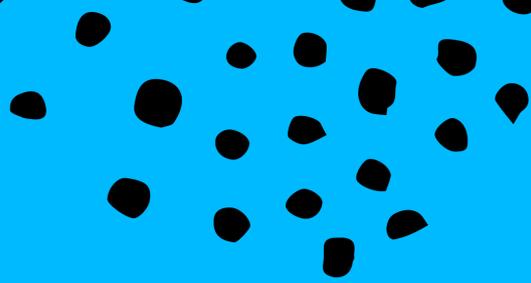


WELCOME TO 30 DAYS OF PRAYER

Greater Sydney Conference



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dj@precisionprinters.com.au

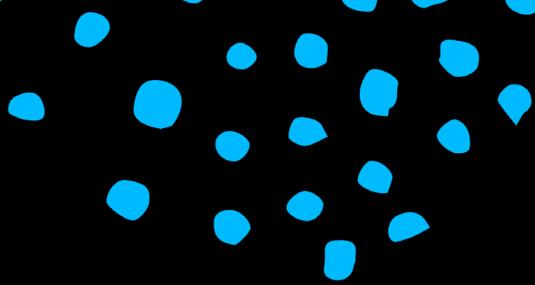
Written by	Jarrod Stackelroth
Edited by	Lauren Bongard Schwarz
Artwork by	Lynda G. Abreu and Nathalia Valenca
Project Coordinator	Patricia Goncalves
Photography Stock Imagery	Unsplash - unsplash.com
Adapted by	GSC Communications Department
Arranged by	Nathalia Valenca

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Intro



First words

The Gospel of Mark is thought by most scholars to be the first Gospel written. As a writer and journalist myself, Mark is quite striking in his succinct, almost news-like recording of events. This makes the stories in his Gospel quick and to the point. While the other synoptic Gospels take the same stories in Mark and expand them, Mark records in a snappy style.

But this doesn't mean that Mark's meaning is limited. Each short vignette is pregnant with meaning and purpose. Through the next 30 days, we will journey through this 16-chapter Gospel, following Jesus through His ministry. We will not be able to touch on every story, but I encourage you to read around the

stories that are included in this devotional and allow yourself to find meaning and motivation in them as well.

Mark's themes include the hidden kingdom that is all around, the messianic secret that is Jesus' power and presence and the importance of discipleship.

These ideas keep popping up through Mark. As you read these devotions and the accompanying Bible stories, ask yourself where you see kingdom ideas, how you can live as a citizen and disciple of the kingdom and what God is revealing to you about your life and its place in His plan.





One

Prepare the way

Read Mark 1:1–8.

Mark jumps straight into the Gospel story by introducing Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist. John points clearly to Jesus. As readers of Mark's Gospel, what we learn from John will help us prepare to know Jesus over the next 30 days.

John stayed out in the desert, wore simple clothes and had a strange diet. But his prophet's message was very simple and cut through the strangeness. We can learn from John's message so we're ready to walk with Jesus:

1. *Humility: John was all about Jesus — nothing about his clothes or his habits pointed to himself. To prepare the way for Jesus, John brought himself low to point to the One "more powerful than I". John sought God's approval rather than man's.*
2. *Repentance and confession: Before Jesus arrived, John preached repentance and confession. For God to enter our lives, we must remove those things that*

separate us from Him. Confessing our sins and shortcomings to God means they lose their power.

3. *Openness to the Holy Spirit: John preaches that he is baptising with water to prepare for the Messiah, but Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit. Baptism is often referred to as the outward demonstration of an inner commitment. When the Holy Spirit moves in, you can be assured that you will become more and more like Jesus. So to prepare the way for Jesus to work in your life, ask the Holy Spirit to make His home in your heart.*

John prepared the way by calling people to repentance. What past hurts, habitual sins, and unforgiveness am I holding onto today that are stopping Jesus from entering the scene of my life?

**I CANNOT BECOME RIGHT WITH GOD
AND FILLED WITH HIS HOLY SPIRIT
UNTIL I HUMBLE MY PRIDE AND
CONFESS AND REPENT OF MY SIN.**





Two



Animals and Angels

Read Mark 1:9–13.

So you've decided in the next 30 days to get serious about Jesus. Are you worried? Have you ever heard someone say, "After you are baptised the devil will try to attack you even harder"? Clearly, they could claim some biblical basis for it, as that's what happens to Jesus in this passage.

We need to stop saying it. This statement gives the enemy too much credit and may even discourage or turn people away from making the best decision of their lives. I've heard young people saying things like "My life was great until my baptism. Then everything went bad."

As people who attend church, we often attribute special events or seasons of blessing to God. We feel like things are going great. It is easy to believe God loves us and we see the Holy Spirit's touches in every blessing we receive.

But then comes the wilderness experience.

In the wilderness, Jesus is isolated from friends and family, support, companionship, and even food and shelter. He is

alone. Notice in verse 12 that it was the Spirit who sent Jesus into the wilderness. The wilderness is not bad, as we always suppose, but it is hard and wild animals live there.

The isolation and anxiety of 2020 may have felt like a year of wilderness. COVID-19 stalked through the months, leaving us feeling isolated and alone. We often feel a sense of loneliness and hopelessness when hit with hardship and heartache — sickness, redundancy, death of a loved one, relationship issues, bills and stress.

Interestingly, Mark doesn't focus on the specific temptations and how Jesus deals with them, as some of the other Gospels do. Instead, Mark shows that the Spirit goes before us, and the passage ends with the simple phrase "angels attended him". In the lowest points of life, whatever I am going through, God still claims me as His child, through the covering love of Jesus. And that means, even in the lows, His angels are there.

WHAT WILDERNESS AM I CURRENTLY WALKING THROUGH? HOW CAN I STOP AND ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S PRESENCE?



Three



Count the cost

Read Mark 1:14–28.

This is where Jesus starts His ministry. He has been proclaimed, baptised and tested, and now He has returned from the wilderness ready to start!

What does He do that we should do? What does He ask from us? What is the cost or price to get into the kingdom?

1. *He proclaims the good news out of a place of strong connection with His Father — 40 days in the wilderness. When was the last time I told someone about my faith in a confident way? Is “proclaiming” something I incorporate into my Christian walk? What if I don’t know how? If we follow Him, like He asks, He will teach us to be fishers of people. But more on that later.*
2. *He calls for repentance, belief and obedience. There’s that repentance again. Why is it so important? Because it reminds us of grace — that we’re not doing this on our own merits. After we repent and*

believe there is another stage: to follow. As Jesus starts collecting His disciples, all He asks of them is to follow Him.

3. *Nothing and everything. To follow Jesus costs nothing in terms of money or goods. However, Andrew and Peter are called to leave their jobs, and James and John are called to leave their jobs and their families. Ouch! Am I willing to put God first in my life? To follow His will in the big decisions?*

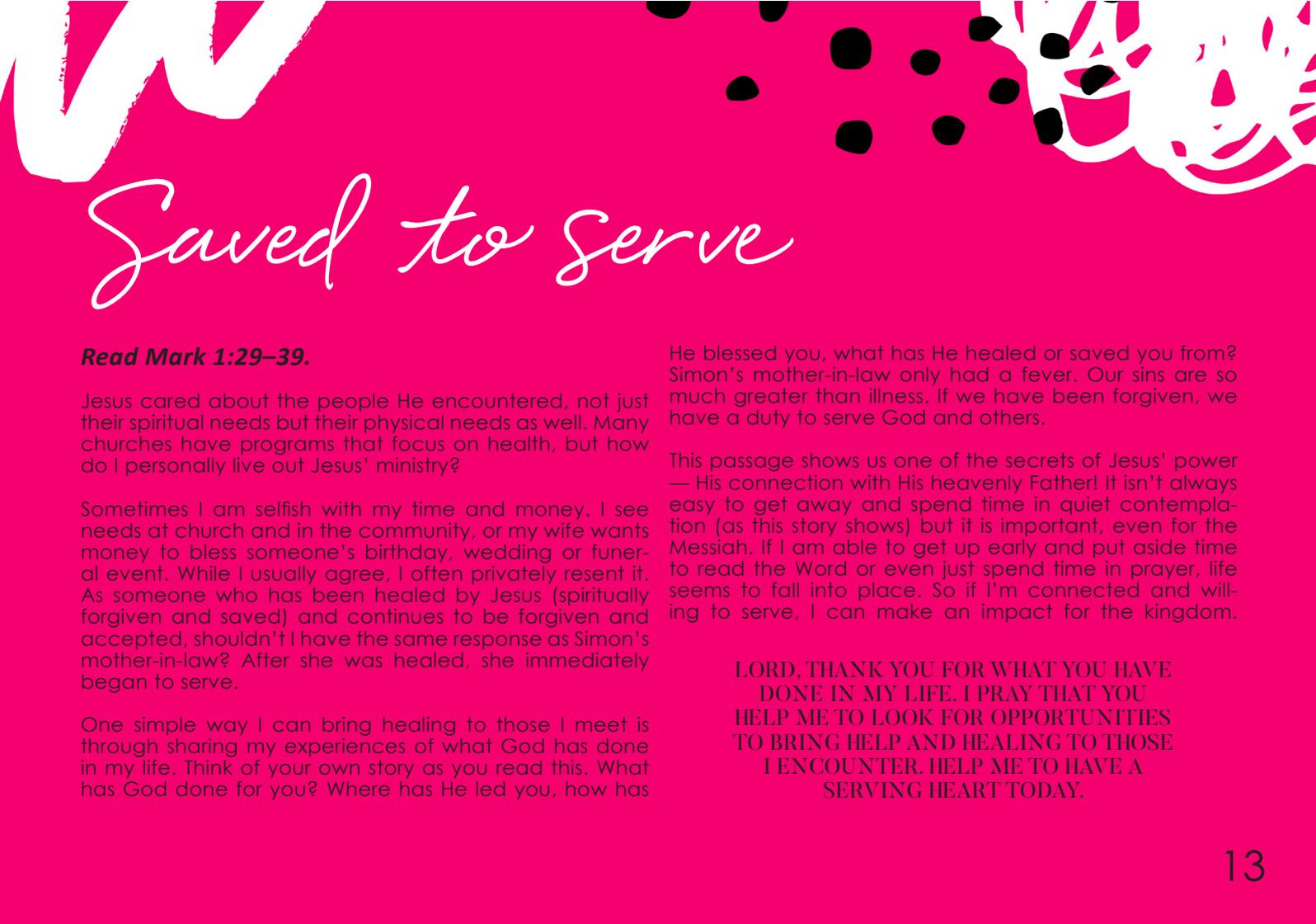
Jesus begins His ministry by teaching and healing. Throughout the Gospels these two things come up again and again — He teaches with authority.

FATHER, I PRAY THAT YOU SHOW ME YOUR PLAN FOR MY LIFE TODAY. SHOW ME WHO I CAN INFLUENCE AND HOW I CAN SPEAK WITH AUTHORITY TO THE PROBLEMS IN MY OWN LIFE AND THE LIVES OF OTHERS. HELP ME TO HAVE A HEART FOR MISSION LIKE YOURS. AMEN.



Four





Saved to serve

Read Mark 1:29–39.

Jesus cared about the people He encountered, not just their spiritual needs but their physical needs as well. Many churches have programs that focus on health, but how do I personally live out Jesus' ministry?

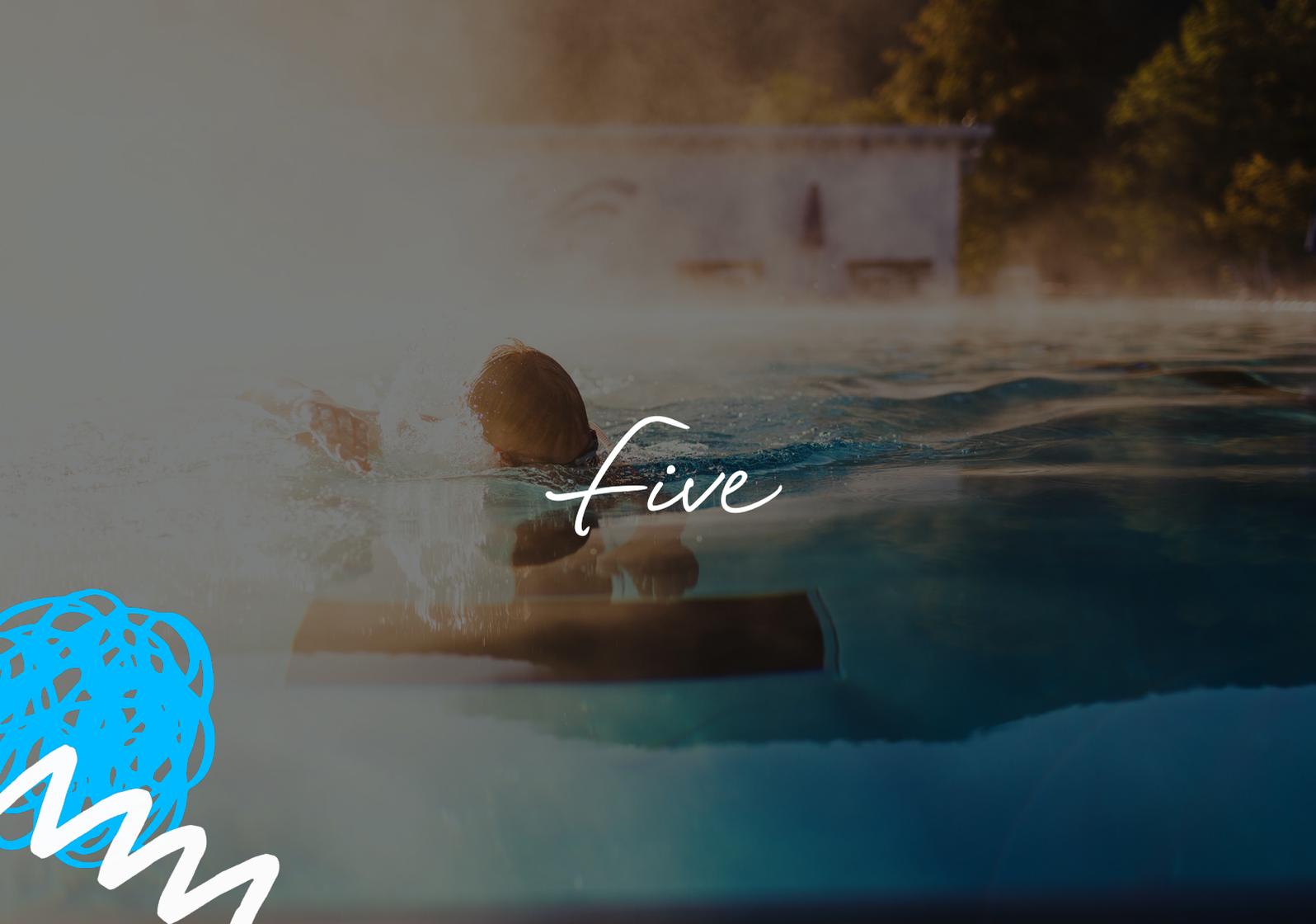
Sometimes I am selfish with my time and money. I see needs at church and in the community, or my wife wants money to bless someone's birthday, wedding or funeral event. While I usually agree, I often privately resent it. As someone who has been healed by Jesus (spiritually forgiven and saved) and continues to be forgiven and accepted, shouldn't I have the same response as Simon's mother-in-law? After she was healed, she immediately began to serve.

One simple way I can bring healing to those I meet is through sharing my experiences of what God has done in my life. Think of your own story as you read this. What has God done for you? Where has He led you, how has

He blessed you, what has He healed or saved you from? Simon's mother-in-law only had a fever. Our sins are so much greater than illness. If we have been forgiven, we have a duty to serve God and others.

This passage shows us one of the secrets of Jesus' power — His connection with His heavenly Father! It isn't always easy to get away and spend time in quiet contemplation (as this story shows) but it is important, even for the Messiah. If I am able to get up early and put aside time to read the Word or even just spend time in prayer, life seems to fall into place. So if I'm connected and willing to serve, I can make an impact for the kingdom.

**LORD, THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU HAVE
DONE IN MY LIFE. I PRAY THAT YOU
HELP ME TO LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES
TO BRING HELP AND HEALING TO THOSE
I ENCOUNTER. HELP ME TO HAVE A
SERVING HEART TODAY.**



Five





Healing hands

Read Mark 2:1–12.

Have you ever waited in an emergency department at hospital? Once they're sure you're not dying, you can be in for a long wait. Imagine the frustration of the paralytic man. He wants to see Jesus but can't walk, can't push his way through the crowds and is stuck at the back. Yet his friends carry him through and find a way! (We all need friends like that.)

A paralysed man in that society was probably seen as quite worthless. Maybe he was born that way or became paralytic through some accident. Jesus looks past his external problems and sees his heart. The Saviour offers him salvation and also heals him.

So what does that mean for us?

To Jesus, you are more than the problems you have. He sees past your sin, your deformity, your shame and your guilt, and He has compassion.

Jesus can heal you physically (your needs, your health), but His first priority is to cleanse you of sin and bring you spiritual peace.

If Jesus' priority was to save people physically and spiritually, we must have the same goal.

The people exclaim, "We have never seen anything like this!" They're impressed but may have missed the point. Jesus offers healing and salvation readily. He is concerned with our physical and spiritual wellbeing. We don't have to jump the queue or wait for hours to get His attention. We are at the top of the list, priority patients, if we choose to put our names down.

Ask today and start running again!

JESUS, HELP ME TO OVERCOME THE THING
THAT IS KEEPING ME FROM WALKING
STRAIGHT AND TALL. I KNOW YOU CAN TAKE
THE BURDEN AND SIN OUT OF MY LIFE. I PRAY
THAT YOU FORGIVE MY SIN AND HELP ME TO
RUN THE RACE. GIVE ME FRIENDS AND SUP-
PORT AND HELP ME TO KNOW WHOM TO TALK
TO. THANK YOU, LORD.



Six



To nap, or not to nap

Read Mark 2:23 — 3:1–6.

Sometimes Sabbath was hard growing up in the church. Don't get me wrong, my parents did a lot to make Sabbath special for us. We had special Sabbath games, books and videos, but sometimes we were just hanging out for the sun to go down. It was probably not until I got into senior high school that I really began to appreciate the Sabbath — 24 hours of guilt-free holiday every week, no study involved.

I've been blessed by Sabbath, heard its benefits professed and have kept it in different places and with different people. I've seen people who find Sabbath a burden, some who see it as a suggestion and those who delight in it. Here, we find it used as a challenge to personal spiritual commitment and the authority of the Son.

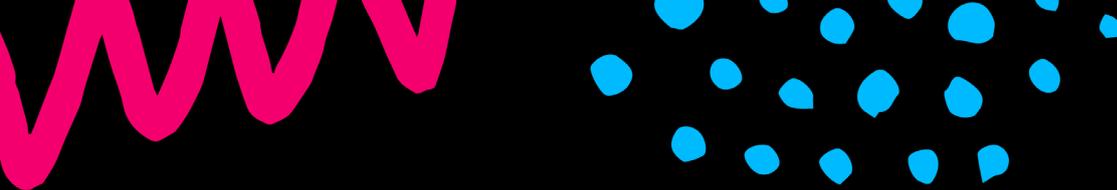
It's no accident that Mark puts these stories together. The Pharisees target the disciples, then set a trap for Jesus Himself. (I must remember not to use my religiosity to trap or burden other people.) Jesus emphasises some important principles of Sabbath here:

1. *The Sabbath was made for us! Enjoy the Sabbath and don't treat it like a burden.*
2. *Do good on Sabbath. Time and again in the Gospels, Jesus asks if it's better to do good or evil, to save or to kill. There is no ambiguity, no rationalisation. He doesn't examine the paradox of doing good or doing nothing. If you are not doing good, you are doing evil. Jesus could have waited until it was no longer Sabbath to heal the man's hand, but He wanted to make a point. Don't wait to do good, do it now! Use the Sabbath to heal, to save and to share the good news. Is church always the best place to do that?*
3. *Do what is right, even (or especially) in the face of opposition.*

IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP HEAL BROKEN PEOPLE AND SEEK AND SAVE THE LOST, EVEN ON SABBATH! MAYBE I'D BETTER RETHINK THAT SABBATH AFTERNOON NAP ...



Seven



Welcome to the family

Read Mark 3:20, 21, 31–34.

Not only did the teachers of the law have a lot to say about Jesus and His methods, His own family did too. In fact, they thought He was crazy!

This is the hard truth about Christ's call. Many times in the Gospels we are called to give up everything. Sometimes, like the disciples, it is work, sometimes wealth, sometimes even family.

As we know, is often a voluntary response to grace, as we see with Zacchaeus. Sometimes it is the thing holding us back, and sometimes it is the thing we love the most. This is the cost of discipleship. We are called to give our very lives, and many of the early disciples did. The question is:

How many of us are willing to choose Christ over all?

Some of you may have experienced rejection for your beliefs. If not outright rejection, others may have scoffed or ignored your faith. Family members may have turned their back on God, placing a wedge between you or fracturing your relationship.

It is an isolating feeling. It is a cost. It is a sacrifice. It can't be smoothed over or repaired with cliches. It hurts. Yet Jesus Himself went through it. Here He provides hope for all those who have lost anything for His cause.

"Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

It is a promise that we, in spite of our

sins, become co-heirs with Jesus. It's not something to look forward to but something here and now.

IT IS THE JOY OF WORSHIPPING IN A CHURCH ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD AND BEING INVITED HOME FOR LUNCH, ACCEPTED INTO FELLOWSHIP AND KNOWING YOU ARE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER THAN YOURSELF. IT IS HOME. AND IT IS YOURS.

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY!





Eight



I am dirt

Read Mark 4:1–20.

I bought some crunchy salad mix — a collection of baby chickpeas and other small seeds and beans. After being left in the fridge too long, they started sprouting. Seeds are amazing carriers of life. Jesus equates the seeds spread in His story to the Word. The Word brings life and has life contained within it.

This is one of Jesus' best-known parables and would have resonated in the agrarian society where He was speaking. Jesus provides His own explanation of what the different elements mean.

But how does the story apply to me?

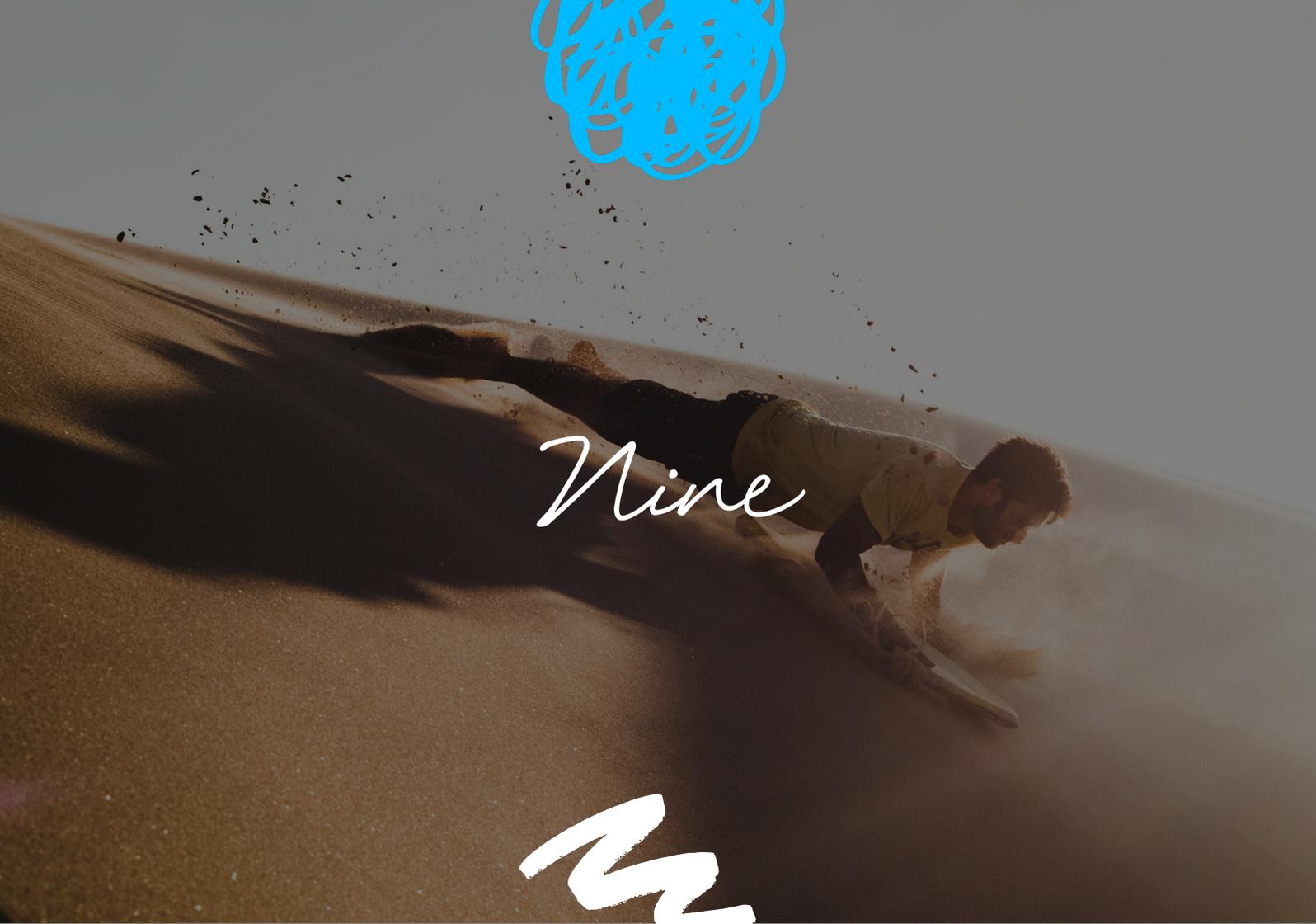
I am dirt. I have been given the Word. The real question is, how do I receive it? The seeds have the same value wherever they are spread. The Farmer spreads His seeds in the same way. The thing that changes is the soil and its receptiveness. Me. I was struck by this fact. All the soils heard/received/experienced the Word, but not all of them were changed by it, used it or enabled it to grow.

For the Word of God to be effective in our lives it needs to be allowed to grow deep roots. This can only happen if the ground is prepared. The ground of my heart must be humble, not hard. Through confession and humility, I realise I am only dirt, and any growth or multiplication that comes out of me comes from Jesus. I must ingest the Word, internalise it.

By taking the rocks out of my life, allowing the seed to seep deep and scaring off the birds instead of entertaining them, I can have a heart ready to receive and then use the Word of God.

If I accept the Word with the right attitude, it will grow and multiply out of me. You and I are important in God's great salvific plan. His Word, lived out in our lives, will produce fruit (both the fruits of the spirit and reclaiming others for the kingdom). A true Christian life, a person who really does accept the Word, will see growth.

**ARE YOU READY TO RECEIVE GOD'S WORD
AND GROW?**



Nine

3



Light in the dark

Read Mark 4:21.

Most of us have access to electricity 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But it wasn't always so. I was speaking with a friend who worked in Nepal and only had electricity for certain hours during the day. He said the candlelight adds romance, but I imagine it is also inconvenient.

We take for granted the availability of light. We can read all night, if we want to, and find our way to the bathroom. Those hearing Jesus, however, knew of the crowding darkness that would take over when the sun went down.

They knew how hard it was to find things after dark. Good people slept and left the darkness to its own devices.

It's the feeling you have during a blackout or on a Pathfinder camp. Your lamp or torch is crucial.

No matter how weak, your torch still lights the room enough for you to see. Jesus asks what good a lamp is under a bowl or the bed. Total darkness returns. Put it on a stand in the middle of the room and it lights up the place.

Have you noticed how easy it is to share light? It might be your candle but everyone in the room can see by it.

We know the Light. He is easily available at any time of the day or night.

Yet how often do we share the Light that we have?

There is a requirement in this passage. Jesus urges His listeners to consider carefully what they are hearing because we will be measured by how we use what we have been given.

**DEAR LORD, HELP ME TO HAVE
CONFIDENCE TO PUT YOU ON
A STAND IN MY LIFE SO YOUR
LIGHT CAN SHINE EFFECTIVELY
OUT OF ME. SHOW ME HOW TO
BE FAITHFUL AND LET YOUR
LIGHT SHINE. HELP ME TO BE A
LIGHT THAT BANISHES DARKNESS
TODAY, IN MY WORKPLACE,
SCHOOL AND HOME.**



Wavy white line

Pink scribble

Ten

Just be

Read Mark 5:21–43.

As Christ's followers, we are called to be like Him. This passage, which is really two stories in one, gives us valuable insight into how Jesus treated those who came to Him for help.

1. Be available. If someone comes to you for help, then help.
2. Be flexible. Allow yourself to be distracted for God's work.
3. Be discerning. Jesus knew who needed help without words.
4. Be loving. Love the undesirable, heal the unclean. Reach out to the untouchables and show compassion on those in need.
5. Be encouraging. "Don't be afraid, just believe."
6. Be optimistic. Just believe in the face of insurmountable odds. Jairus' daughter was dead, but nothing is impossible for God.
7. Be courageous. Ignore the crowd that laughs at you.
8. Be humble. Send the crowd away. Jesus healed in secret with a touch and a quiet word. He even sent all but His closest disciples out.
9. Believe the impossible. Jesus raised the dead.
10. Be patient. Jairus' daughter died while Jesus was on the way. God

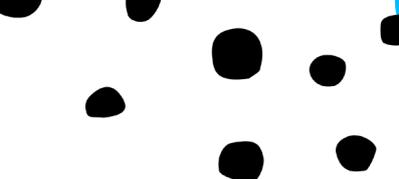
doesn't always answer in our time, before or while bad stuff is happening. But He does answer.

Be like Jesus. Don't be limited by overwhelming problems, busyness or following the crowd, especially when it comes to helping people. Nothing is too big for Jesus, so if it's too big for you, leave it to Him.

DEAR JESUS, HELP ME TO DO THESE THINGS TODAY. SHOW ME WHERE YOU NEED ME TO HELP OR HEAL SOMEBODY. GIVE ME UNDERSTANDING AND DISCERNMENT. MOULD MY CHARACTER TO BE MORE LIKE YOURS. SHOW ME WHO TO DISCIPLE AND PRAY FOR. AMEN.



Eleven



Hometown hero

Read Mark 6:1–6.

By now, Jesus is well into His ministry. He's drawing crowds and gaining quite a following. He's cast out demons, healed people sick from birth, even raised the dead. So returning home, you would expect a hero's welcome — fanfare, a parade with marching band and streamers. The opposite happens.

“Isn't this the carpenter?”

I imagine them saying, down their snobby noses. And they took offense for no other reason than that He was familiar to them.

Do you ever feel unappreciated? Don't worry. Even Jesus was without honour in His own town. Maybe you're striving

week after week to do things for church, helping people and being your best and no one's noticing. Be encouraged. God notices the unnoticed.

The flipside is also important:

Don't judge people — including those that you are familiar with. You don't know everything about everyone, even the people you think you know. You don't know how God is working in their lives, so pay more attention to what He's doing in yours.

It takes faith to be healed by Jesus. It takes actually accepting that He is who He says He is. It is interesting that Jesus couldn't do any miracles there except to heal a few sick people, and He was amazed by his townspeople's lack of faith. Knowing everything

leaves no room for the miraculous. You categorise, package and box up God and He respects your box. Unfortunately for the people in Jesus' hometown, they missed the blessings and amazing things He did elsewhere. If you know too much, you might miss a blessing.

**DEAR LORD, GIVE ME FAITH
TO SEE YOUR HEALING POWER
WORK IN AND THROUGH MY LIFE.
HUMBLE ME TO RECEIVE IT SO I
DON'T JUDGE. THANK YOU FOR
THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE AND
WORK FOR YOU, WHATEVER I AM
DOING, WHEREVER I GO. AMEN.**



Twelve



Two by two

Read Mark 6:6–13.

Being a follower or disciple of Jesus is not a passive activity. Discipleship is not just cheering on the leader or believing in His cause. It requires actively partaking in, emulating and learning His methods and His ministry. Jesus models this by sending His disciples out two by two.

They each take part of the beautiful message of the gospel that Jesus brought, a call for repentance and healing the sick — the whole-body healing that Jesus offers, echoing God's salvific plan of restoration. Love God, reconciling to Him through repentance, and love others, physically caring for their needs; love in a practical, personal, sacrificial sense, rather than the saccharine emotion of Valentine's Day cards.

So are you ready to take that gospel to the world? How?

Firstly, the disciples are sent out in pairs. They go with support, brotherhood and a common purpose. They have a mission and understanding of what they are doing.

There is less chance of becoming isolated, discouraged or off track. If you have a passion for ministry, you need backup, mentoring, accountability. Find and develop these partnerships.

Be committed to the message. Focus on the message, not on the props or trappings or people that can discourage. We get caught up sometimes in meetings, strategies, mission statements. These guys didn't stick around. They emphasised their message, and if it wasn't accepted, they moved

on. Continue praying, but understand that you may not be the harvester.

Keep it simple. There were no PowerPoint presentations, concordances or historical dissertations of the works/faith debate. Their message had one main thrust. Repent. Turn back to the Lord. It was simple yet profound. Coupled with their obvious care for people and the healing they were able to perform through God's power, their message certainly turned heads.

**JESUS, YOU HAVE GIVEN US THE
AUTHORITY. YOU TOLD US TO GO
AND SENT THE HELPER. HELP US
GO IN UNITY, COMMITMENT AND
SIMPLICITY.**



Thirteen



Clean or unclean

Read Mark 7:14–23.

Have you ever accidentally eaten something you shouldn't have? I remember when my brother was about three we found him behind the lounge, munching on half a millipede. We assume the other half was already down the hatch, as it was nowhere to be found. I don't think millipedes are clean. But if you, like my brother, have stumbled, never fear:

“In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean”.

Wait! Before you throw a vegan cookbook or Fundamental Belief 22 at me, let me reassure you. I'm vegetarian and all for healthy living etc. But what is the principle behind what Jesus is saying? How I can apply it to my life?

Don't make excuses! Nothing outside can make you unclean. God gave the clean and unclean regulations to protect us because they are actually better for our health, but adherence to the health laws does not equal salvation. So start looking at yourself.

Don't let other people make you feel guilty, and don't burden others with guilt. If you are a new Christian, get to know Jesus. If we try too hard to shape people into what we think they should look like, we may turn them away. We should always be ready to explain and encourage and live as an example without forcing anyone. It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict and convince. The most important job we have is to introduce others to the Saviour, see them accept His salvation and watch as He transforms their behaviours.

What dwells in your thoughts makes you unclean. Watch what you say, think and do. From your heart come evil thoughts. You can act unclean and spread uncleanness to others through your actions. If I focus on evil thoughts, my whole being becomes unclean.

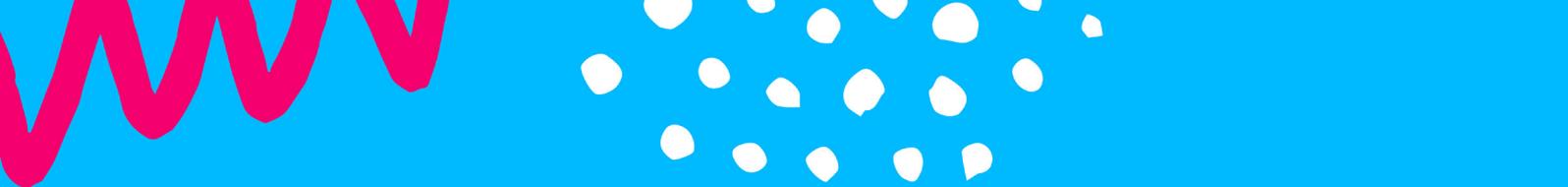
LORD, FREE ME FROM MY EVIL THOUGHTS. HELP ME TO FORGIVE. HELP ME NOT TO BE JUDGEMENTAL AND FOCUS ON THE SINS OF OTHERS BUT TO FOCUS ON CLEANING OUT MY OWN MIND TO MAKE IT MORE SUITABLE FOR YOUR USE.





fourteen





Bread and dogs

Read Mark 7:24.

This story jars. It disrupts our visions of Jesus, meek and mild. It offends our politically correct consciousness. Is Jesus calling the woman a dog? I thought He loved everybody.

Throughout His life, Jesus showed greater regard for women and children than did most men of His era. So what is He trying to do here? I'm no theologian, but here is what I get out of it.

It's no accident this story follows the Pharisees' attack on Jesus' disciples and the clean and unclean debate. There is a clear contrast here. Those who should have it all together clearly don't, and Jesus pulls them up.

This lady is shown mercy even though, as a foreigner, she is considered unwor-

thy. Jesus appears harsh and callous in our eyes, but His reply may not have been all that unusual at the time and place He made it. He is testing her. Instead of biting back or walking away, she fights with perseverance for her daughter.

In life we may suffer discomfort, restlessness, opposition and fear when we are trying to save those we love. This woman fights through all of that for her child. She perseveres and ignores the opposition. Sometimes our faith is tested.

How far are we willing to go?

If she didn't really believe, she would probably have decided it wasn't worth the humiliation of asking again. It is easy to give up on people — or even God — to write them off as wrong or powerless if they disagree with our worldviews.

This woman shows that when it is an idea worth fighting for, you shouldn't give it up.

Don't allow common perceptions of people to stop you from aiding them. This foreign woman fights for her daughter, and her daughter is healed. The good fight requires perseverance. It takes us out of our comfort zones, but there is reward for perseverance.

**PURSUE THOSE YOU WANT TO
SEE SAVED, STEP IN THE GAP
AND INTERCEDE WITH GOD ON
THEIR BEHALF.**



Fifteen





I can see

Read Mark 8:22–26.

How many people have you led to Jesus? Have you witnessed any lives changed that you had some part in influencing? In this story, “some people” brought a blind man to Jesus. They are not named, yet they are critical to this story.

We may have forgotten them, but I'm sure the blind man never did. They brought him to Jesus and they begged Jesus to touch him. They had faith that Jesus could make a difference. They could see, so they knew the benefits and power of sight. They may have seen Jesus healing and had faith He could heal their friend.

If you know Jesus — have been healed and restored by Him — then you have received your sight. You have spiritual sight or discernment and it empowers you to bring other people to meet Him. You do this by intercessory prayer, reflecting Jesus in your humility and loving behaviour towards others, and, of course, telling them about your Saviour. It is a wonderful feeling to lead

someone to a place where they encounter Jesus and watch as He opens their eyes and melts their hearts.

This story also reminds us that people aren't always changed immediately when they encounter the Saviour. Their sight comes slowly sometimes, but the process builds their faith. The blind man may not have had that much faith at the outset. He was probably nervous, wondering if this would work, wondering how it was possible that he could ever see again.

But when he began to see people like trees, a blurry vision of the world, I'm sure his excitement built. We must be patient with ourselves and others as we watch God change lives.

**THE HEALING BEGINS WHEN WE COME TO
JESUS, BUT SOMETIMES IT TAKES TIME FOR OUR
SPIRITUAL VISION TO BE FOCUSSED. WE BEGIN
TO SEE MORE CLEARLY THE MORE TIME WE
SPEND WITH JESUS.**



Sixteen

The way of the Cross

Read Mark 8:34–39.

I want you to read that passage again. It doesn't sound much like a walk in the park. What happened to the happiness and abundance I thought I was promised? This disciple stuff sounds tough.

That's because it is. I'm not here to pretty it up. It hits me between the eyes as well. The fundamental question Jesus asks is, Is there anything worth your soul? The answer is no.

The whole world is worth less than your soul. If you want to follow Jesus then He must be your number one priority. If you are ashamed of Him then He will be ashamed of you.

Have you ever reached a level on a video game you struggled to get

past? Or maybe you mastered a physical trick like learning to play an instrument or making an impossible shot from the halfway line of a basketball court. It takes practise. It doesn't just happen. You have to have passion and determination.

Striving to master it consumes and encompasses all else. That should be your attitude to your Christian life — an all-consuming passion to succeed. Not for yourself, but for Him.

What does it mean to take up one's cross? Good question. The cross is a symbol of God's sacrifice for us. Carrying the cross is carrying death, and yet the cross was conquered by the resurrection.

So while the cross symbolises death, it also becomes life for us through the

sacrifice made there. When we highlight, proclaim and explain that sacrifice — when it becomes part of our lives that we carry around and share with others, living in the shadow of that sacrifice — we are fulfilling the call of discipleship. This is no easy thing.

Maybe, like me, you have a hard time swallowing this passage, so you contextualise it or rationalise it away. Unfortunately, it seems pretty clear.

**IF WE REALLY PROCLAIM TO
LOVE GOD, THIS IS THE LEVEL HE
HAS CALLED US TO. I'LL LEAVE
YOU ALONE TO THINK THAT
THROUGH.**



Seventeen



Help my unbelief

Read Mark 9:14–27.

Jesus is exasperated! His disciples are in a fluster — unable to achieve what He tasked them. I'm sure His admonition stung. Why couldn't they help? Jesus puts it down to unbelief.

The boy is brought to Jesus and immediately goes into convulsions. Just the presence of Jesus is enough for evil to be challenged. Are we marinating in that presence, taking it wherever we go? This is the first step of truly effective disciples.

I'm struck again and again by the power of intercession in the Gospels. The boy was unable to ask for the help he so desperately needed. But the father doesn't want to presume too much. So he uses qualifying language and weakens his appeal.

"If you can do anything ..."

He puts the onus on Jesus. How often when we pray for things do we make them wishy-washy and vague? We pray for blessings or God's will to be done rather than stating what it is we really want.

Jesus throws it back to him. Jesus wants to know if he's trusting God with an all-in attitude or if he's hedging his bets. What follows is, in my opinion, one of the best answers anyone ever gave Jesus.

"Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'"

I can almost hear the rawness and desperation that cracks his voice. He desperately wants to believe but isn't

sure, after years of hurt and struggle, he can. So he prays a prayer that reveals his belief and his doubts, side by side.

Doubt is natural but it need not cripple us. This father appeals to God to fill up the space in which he falls short. We must live and minister to others in the same way.

As fallen human beings, we are not perfect or all-powerful. But we serve a God who is! He makes up for our inadequacies. God does not fail.

ARE YOU WILLING TO GIVE YOUR LIFE AND PLANS TO HIM? THE BEST PLACE TO START IS A PRAYER LIKE THIS ONE: LORD, I BELIEVE. HELP MY UNBELIEF.

A person is paragliding over a vast mountain valley. The parachute is white with orange and yellow stripes. The valley below is filled with dense green forest, and the surrounding mountains are rocky and grey. The word "Eighteen" is written in a white, cursive font across the center of the image. There are also some abstract white and blue scribbles in the corners.

Eighteen



Comfortable critics

Read Mark 9:38–41.

How often do we have the same response as John?

We think we have a monopoly on truth: the way our church worships, our vision, how many programs we have. Maybe we push big evangelism, or maybe we are a cell-based church. Some have polished performances while other churches happen fairly spontaneously. And let's not get started thinking about other denominations. No, our way is the best way, the right way, the only way.

It is so easy to fall into the comfort of elitism. We know the Saviour well, which means those that disagree with us must not know Him. "... We told him to stop," says John. "... he was not one of us." "Whoever is not against us is for us," Jesus replies.

As part of the body of Christ, we have different roles. But the main thing is that we are focussed on the name of Jesus. Unity is about allowing other people to work for Jesus in His name but not using our methods or location or, dare I say it, without as much illumination as we have been blessed with.

Different methods attract different people to the kingdom. As individuals, we need to focus on how we can do good in His name rather than what others are doing.

Unfortunately (and I've seen this in my own Christian walk), as we come into a place of familiarity with God or a depth of understanding, we think we've made it.

We become comfortable in our proximity with the Saviour. We are sold on His grace but can't share it. We grow spiritually fat and protective.

Earlier in Mark 9, the disciples have been unable to cast out a demon. It's ironic they're now trying to stop someone who is apparently successful.

LET'S FOCUS ON DOING GOOD AND NOT ON WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING. LET'S REPRESENT CHRIST ALONGSIDE OUR CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS, NOT IN COMPETITION WITH THEM.



Nineteen



Face your Jerusalem

Read Mark 10:32–34.

Fear is one of the strongest human emotions. It produces physical reactions — the hair on your arms stands up and you feel hollow in the pit of your stomach.

There are different types of fear: sudden flight-or-fight reactions that set you on edge for hours after the danger has past; slow-creeping, coiling fear that slowly constricts and suffocates; anxious, irritating fear, like a splinter under the skin you just can't dig out. Fear is often irrational, and yet it is a powerful motivator.

Here, those following Jesus are afraid. He sounds serious. There will be no turning back. The decision makes no sense. Unfortunately, God doesn't always wait until we're ready. His timing leaves us astonished or afraid.

Where is Jesus leading you? He talks of death and persecution. It sounds hard, sounds painful, but at some point things have to come to a head. You see, Jerusalem was a place of triumph. It was the place where evil was

overcome and the God-Man's mission was successfully completed.

You must find your Jerusalem. What has God equipped and trained you for? The disciples had spent some time with Jesus. They'd watched Him do miraculous things and they'd even done some of those things themselves. Maybe you've walked with Jesus for a while.

At some point in the journey, He needs you to bite the bullet and head to Jerusalem. Maybe start that missional project that suits your talents or stand in the gap for a family member in a crisis, one who needs to meet their Saviour.

Even though it seems daunting — the sacrifice and risk is great — we must follow through. Jesus did for us.

**HE SET HIS FACE TO JERUSALEM AND DID NOT
TURN BACK. TO SEEK AND SAVE THE LOST, HE LOST
EVERYTHING — TO GAIN IT ALL.**



WE ARE ON
Twenty
FIRE
act now

Start up

Read Mark 11:15–18.

Not only did COVID run rampant through 2020, but racism also reared its ugly head. The reaction of many Christians was quite disappointing. They used the argument that Christians should not get political to avoid standing with the marginalised.

They repeated slogans like “All Lives Matter” to avoid supporting those hurting in the community. Or they looked at victims’ past crimes or different ideology to excuse action and to get out of having to take a stance.

It is one thing to disagree with or even condemn racism or any type of evil after it happens. It takes an altogether different type of courage to stand up against wrong. It is much easier to stay safe — something that Jesus didn’t do!

When Jesus arrived in the temple, He was shocked. So He stood against what He knew was wrong, even when it meant breaking the status quo. As Christians, we are called to stand against injustice when and where we see it. This doesn’t mean becoming militant about our particular set of interpretations. It doesn’t mean enforcing our own beliefs or will upon others. It means that when we see clear injustices we are expected to act, not let someone else deal with it.

In today’s text, Jesus is dealing with church members; people who worked, worshipped and believed in the temple and its rituals. They worshiped the One True God, yet they had sold out.

They were more interested in profit than prophets. I don’t think the problem was that they were conveniently selling

doves for sacrifice. They were ripping people off and trying to make money off of people’s devotion.

God is not an opportunity — a ticket to Heaven, a benevolent spirit or a merry Santa. He is a lifestyle. More than that, if you are a follower of God, it informs your human emotions, gives you a standard and a purpose — to increase His temple into a house of “prayer for all nations”. God wants an inclusive, love-driven family that rejects injustice, immorality and opportunism.

**WHAT TABLES DO YOU NEED
TO OVERTURN IN THE TEMPLE
COURTS? STAND UP TO EVIL
WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER IT, EVEN
IF IT MEANS PUTTING YOURSELF
IN THE FIRING LINE. YOUR
SAVIOUR DID.**



Twenty-One

Dangerously empty

Read Mark 11:12–14; 20–25.

The most dangerous thing to be when Jesus is around is an empty fig tree. In the middle of this story, a hungry Jesus goes to a fig tree only to discover that it is full of leaves but has no fruit.

With His disciples listening on, Jesus curses the tree with an admonition that no one will ever eat from its branches again.

Is Jesus just having a bad day? I don't think so. He's teaching His disciples an important lesson.

The tree has been provided with everything it needs. God sends the water and the sun, and the soil of the region must be good for fig trees because there are plenty of them. Yet it has no fruit. Have you been given opportunities to feed others, spiritually and physically? If

you're reading this, you've been blessed with the ability to read, which means you have a head start on millions of people around the world.

Reading on a digital device? How did you afford that? Chances are you are within a top percentile of this world's population in terms of opportunities and blessings. But are your branches empty?

Here's the point. Jesus knows what the fig tree could be, the sweetness it could share, the sustenance and the support it could offer.

"Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!" Yes, Jesus replies, with faith and conviction they can make things like this happen — the flipside of fruitlessness.

Faith is the remedy for emptiness. Got lots of opportunity but empty branches?

God wants to fill you up, but you must be rooted in faith. Jesus is giving His disciples the dream of a kingdom filled with powerful faith.

One condition the Bible places on answered prayer is forgiveness. The bitter, the grudge holders, the angry limit the power of God in their lives. God respects their choices to live by the law they hold everyone else to.

We need faith and forgiveness. Then we can feed the world.

ARE YOUR BRANCHES EMPTY? DO YOU BASK IN THE LIGHT OF THE SUN WITHOUT GIVING BACK? BEWARE, OR YOU MIGHT JUST FIND YOURSELF WITHERED AND ALONE.

Twenty-Two



Clear as onions

Read Mark 12:1–12.

My wife, Lina, hates onions. I try saying "Don't worry you can't even taste them." But as soon as she knows they're there, she has to pick them out.

Early in our relationship when visiting my parents in Adelaide, Mum made pasta. As we enjoyed lunch, joking and laughing, Lina sat quietly next to me. I looked over as, face etched with concentration, she picked through her pasta sauce to remove any skerrick of onion. Silence fell as everyone turned to watch the extrication process. Eventually, aware of the attention, Lina looked up and said "What? I don't like onions!"

No matter how you dress them up, hide them, or prepare them, my wife hates onions. In this parable of Jesus, the meaning is pretty clear. The chief priests and elders know exactly what is meant, and it's strong and clearly distasteful.

Jesus is on the attack after they refused to answer His question about authority in Mark 11.

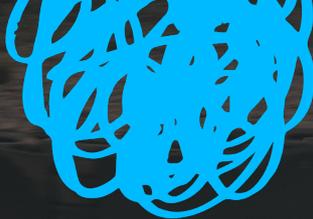
This message was directly to institutions in authority at the time. And they got it. In fact, they became angry, plotting to kill Jesus. Usually His parables were mysterious, but this one was clear. There was no hiding the onions in the sauce. They were strong enough to make the eyes water! But there is a strong message for us as well.

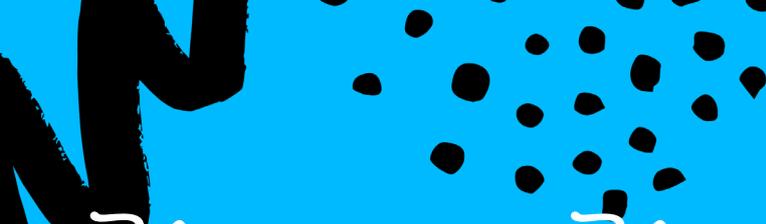
We can't claim Jesus' inheritance and then live like He doesn't exist. We kill Him all over again when we live that way. Our inheritance will be given to someone else if we don't acknowledge where our blessings come from.

We cannot live six days a week like God is far away and suddenly be nice at church. We can't wrest control of everything from the One who owns it and created it. We must give credit where it belongs, and that is not with us. God requires us to "act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8).

**SPEND TIME TODAY THINKING ABOUT WHAT
THAT MEANS FOR YOU.**







Money, Money, Money

Read Mark 12:13–17.

"Money makes the world go 'round." We can't live with it, and can't live without it! Those who are considered good with money are often motivated by it or exceedingly careful with it to the point of being greedy. Others are careless, living beyond their means or squandering money on unnecessary things and barely scraping by.

It is no surprise the Pharisees try to trap Jesus using money. If Jesus were to support the tax, He would prove decidedly unpatriotic. However, if He suggested the tax not be paid, they could report Him to the authorities. Either way, He would lose His influence over the people.

As usual, Jesus gives us principles to live by:

1. Live responsibly. Whether it is taxes, bills or gifts, we shouldn't owe anyone money. Don't get so caught up in accumulating. We should fulfil our responsibilities as citizens of our country and also as citizens of Heaven.

What do we owe God? Well, He created everything. The Psalmist says God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. So what can we give Him? Whatever He claims. I'm not really the owner of anything; I'm just a caretaker.

2. Live sacrificially. Give God your life. Jesus asks us to give. It's that simple (or that difficult). If God expects your all, then don't try to cling to it.
3. Live humbly. Jesus' answer points us to respecting the authority of others. This takes humility. To know what God wants for your life, you have to bow to His will. I find this hard. Sometimes I struggle to connect with God because I get busy doing other things that are important (including and sometimes especially doing God's work). We spend so much time talking about God without truly giving all to Him. We should also respect and honour earthly authorities.

**LORD, HELP ME TO LIVE RESPONSIBLY,
SACRIFICIALLY AND HUMBLY.**



Twenty-four



Spiritual glasses

Read Mark 13:1–28.

Eyeglasses were invented in Italy in the 13th century. Since then there have been numerous advances in glasses technology. Bifocal lenses, invented by Benjamin Franklin, allow people to correct both short- and long-sightedness with the same pair of spectacles. There are even glasses that turn into sunglasses in the right light.

The purpose of all eyeglasses is to help the wearer see more clearly. In this passage, Jesus provides His followers with glasses of spiritual discernment. We all wear a worldview that colours, focusses or blurs our point of view. Jesus wants us to understand the things we see and experience through Him and His Spirit.

In this passage, Jesus warns us and equips us with glasses to understand disasters: "There is some crazy stuff coming, and I want you to be ready and aware."

First off, Jesus wanted His disciples to trust in God, not in man-made things. For the disciples, the temple was the pinnacle of their culture and their faith. They wanted their Messiah to affirm their pride. But Jesus knew man-made things pass away. He wanted His disciples to look through

spiritual lenses. The building means nothing; the God it honours means everything.

Jesus lists a number of terrible events and calls them "the beginning of birth pains". Does He want us to use our special glasses, identify the signs and say, "We told you so"?

No. Jesus wants us alert but not alarmed. The gospel must still be preached to all nations. There is no stopping the work. The glasses help us to not be surprised and to know that God is in control. We already know the outcome.

Jesus' followers for the past 2,000 years have each had their end-of-the-world moment. They've been killed for their faith or died of natural causes, they've suffered famine, disease or war. The end of the world that we look for could come for us personally tomorrow.

IF WE LOOK AT LIFE THROUGH THE GLASSES JESUS GAVE, WE WILL NOT BE DECEIVED, AND WE CAN LIVE COMPASSIONATELY AND UNAFRAID. AFTER ALL, WHEN EVERYTHING ELSE GOES OUT OF FOCUS, GOD'S WORDS WILL NEVER FADE AWAY.



188

Twenty-five



Look busy

Read Mark 13:32–37.

If there was a secret camera in my home, you'd observe an interesting phenomenon. Before a guest arrives, there is a flurry of activity. Washing shoved in the laundry, the dishwasher filled, beds made, shoes put away and rubbish taken out. Especially if it's our parents or a landlord coming around.

It is a lot easier to deal with unexpected guests if you have a relatively clean house to begin with.

We need to ready our houses — clean the houses — of our hearts. We are servants in His house, part of His household.

Many Christians read this passage with awareness that Christ is coming back. They constantly fix their hair and straighten their clothes to greet their Master; standing at attention to receive Him, not a hair out of place.

They fixate on the Second Coming. They read the signs into every event and remind others that He is on His way. While they obsess at getting themselves ready with

timelines and charts, their tasks go unfulfilled. They spend time looking in the mirror instead of looking at the world around them.

The passage says we have been “left in charge, each with an assigned task”. Part of our work is to multiply His kingdom. God doesn't expect us all to be employed by the church to preach or teach. But He does expect us all to be using our skills and talents to work for Him.

There is a sticker that says “Jesus is coming, look busy”. How often do we look busy without achieving anything? Will Christ return and find us working for Him? Will the houses of our lives be set in order because we keep them clean as we go, ready for unexpected guests? Will we welcome Him with excitement and awe instead of missing Him as we focus on ourselves in the mirror of piety, pride and plenty?

**I HOPE NOT. I PRAY TODAY THAT GOD FINDS US
USING THE TALENTS AND TIME HE HAS GIVEN
US, SPREADING HIS LOVE AND MESSAGE OF
REDEMPTION TO THE WORLD.**



Twenty-Six

One-Armed Baller

Read Mark 14:1–11.

A friend and I went out to play basketball at the local courts.

We picked up a half-court, two-on-two game, with a guy named Nick and his mate. Nick had one arm missing from about the elbow.

"Take it slow, take it easy on us," they said. We should have asked them the same thing. Nick had a killer hook-shot, a decent layup and an accurate three-pointer. He was pretty good. I had a lot of respect. Nick's determination, the practise he had put in, his attitude — bringing competition to the able-bodied — it left me inspired ... and challenged.

Do I pursue my passions and my work with excellence or do I cruise through

with able-bodied complacency? In truth, I struggle to defeat mediocrity and abandon procrastination. What about in my spiritual life?

While I love God and want to do His work, I can be lazy. I let life happen, drifting with it, rather than swimming against the current and stepping out for my Saviour.

Jesus came as the Messiah, the "anointed one". Anointed by God at His baptism with water and a dove, Jesus was also anointed by this woman, who gave of all she had — her wealth, her hair, her tears. She did it regardless of ridicule, judgement and personal cost. She did it because she knew Jesus had given her life.

Detractors will question your motives, mock your sacrifice and never

understand. They may even be "seated around" Jesus. They will wonder if what you do is practical or possible.

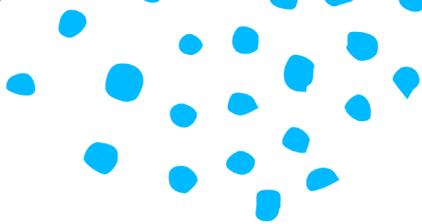
But the woman's focus was on Jesus the whole time. Is my focus, my passion, my drive on Jesus? Is yours?

JESUS SAYS THIS WOMAN'S STORY WILL BE TOLD WHEREVER AND WHEN EVER THE GOSPEL IS PROCLAIMED. IF YOU WANT TO BE THE PROUD OWNER OF A STORY WORTH TELLING, TAKE YOUR EVERYTHING AND GIVE IT TO CHRIST. YOU'LL BE AMAZED AT THE LEGACY HE CAN LEAVE THROUGH YOU.

Twenty-Seven



RAI
TH
B A



Open Home

Read Mark 14:12–16.

I felt impressed to do it, but I was scared. What if they said no? We'd been learning at church how important it was to connect with our neighbours and with our community. I knew we had the right event and the right time to make it happen. That didn't make it any easier.

Luckily, I had my own Aaron, sent by God to help me speak — my wife. She barrelled up to our neighbour's door and knocked while I stood sheepishly next to her. I sent up a silent prayer.

“God, please help our neighbours to accept this invitation into our home for my wife's birthday party.”

The door opened. They smiled and said they'd love to come. As we

gave them the details, I felt a bit silly. God had gone before us.

Image being one of the disciples Jesus sent to prepare for Passover. They had clear instructions, but I wonder if they had doubts. What if we follow the wrong man; What if it's not ready; How can He know these things? But they found that the way had been prepared before them.

How often do we clearly hear the message God is trying to give us? We know what we should do but it's hard — out of our comfort zone, out of our control.

God calls us to do things that make us uncomfortable.

And just because He prepares situations before us doesn't mean they

will be easy. The disciples didn't know this was the “last supper”.

We can also learn something from the homeowner. When the Teacher calls, we must put our homes, our resources and ourselves at His disposal.

LORD, PLEASE USE MY HOME TO BE A KINGDOM HOME, OPEN TO MAKE FRIENDS AND FOR THOSE IN NEED. MAY I PUT MY RESOURCES AND MYSELF AT YOUR DISPOSAL FOR MY NEIGHBOURS AND THOSE IN NEED. OPEN MY HEART AND MY HOME AND GO BEFORE ME IN RELATIONSHIPS SO OTHERS MAY MEET YOU, TOO.



Twenty-Eight



Make your choice

Read Mark 15:1–15.

Shopping. Some people love it. Others loathe it. My main issue with shopping is this: choice. How do I know I am making the right choice? I don't like spending money, and yet I'll spend lots if I know I'm getting something that will last and is the best quality.

On this day, Pilate had a choice. He had options. He could have released Jesus. But he didn't. Why? Mark says it was because he wanted to satisfy the crowd.

In this world of choice, we are often encouraged to make the wrong one — a choice of convenience or advancement, an easy choice, a popular choice.

Pilate had before him a Man he believed was innocent. Yet he washed

his hands of the blood they clamoured for. Did this absolve him from guilt? Did he avoid making a choice?

No. By not choosing, we do make a choice. If we sit silent while injustice happens, we make a choice. When we don't make an effort to connect with our Saviour and make Him King of our lives, we make a choice.

There are only really two options — accept the Saviour or reject Him.

The world invites us choose humanity over divinity, sin over righteousness, rebellion over service, envy over humility, pride over submission.

Jesus invites us to choose life.

I often wonder what I would do if I lived during Jesus' time. I like to imagine

that I'm one of His disciples, just in the background, watching and learning. The uncomfortable truth is, I probably would have made the same decision they did.

There was too much to lose. Or I'd be in the crowd, hopefully curious but probably joining the mob. It's unlikely I'd be standing up to defend Jesus. I'd be too scared.

It's easy to spiritualise or rationalise not standing up and supporting the oppressed and the disadvantaged. But that was our Saviour.

**NOT MAKING A CHOICE
LEADS TO DEATH. MAKE THE
CHOICE THAT LEADS
TO LIFE TODAY.**



Twenty-Nine

Shadow on the Cross

Read Mark 15: 16-47.

As we reach the end of our 30 days of journeying through Mark, what more fitting place to end than spending time contemplating the final moments of Jesus at Calvary? Ellen White, one of the most translated and published female non-fiction authors in history, spent much of her life writing about Jesus. She puts it this way:

"When men and women can more fully comprehend the magnitude of the great sacrifice, which was made by the Majesty of Heaven in dying in man's stead, then will the plan of salvation be magnified, and reflections of Calvary will awaken tender, sacred, and lively emotions in the Christian's heart." PH169 12.2

Mark paints the picture for us. Jesus is mocked and alone. Some of the tender vignettes of the other Gospels (John and Jesus' mother, the thief who believes) are missing here as the Saviour hangs alone. He cries out His abandonment, "My God, My God. Why have you forsaken me?"

Have you ever felt alone? Perhaps you've gone through a dark season of mourning and loss, disease or a fight that felt unwinnable. Jesus here goes through the "valley of the shadow of death" for our sakes — yours and mine.

He knows what it looks like at the bottom of the pit. He knows what it's like to feel far from God, abandoned by all human help.

Some of His supporters find a place for His burial, but His most prominent friends and disciples are conspicuously absent. Do you experience tender or lively emotions at thoughts of the lengths Jesus went for us?

SPEND SOME TIME TODAY IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS. THINK ABOUT THE EXPERIENCES MARK OUTLINES HERE AND WHAT IT MEANS THAT THEY WERE SUFFERED ON YOUR BEHALF. YOU MAY THINK BACK TO A TIME YOU FELT ISOLATED AND ALONE. TAKE CONSOLATION IN THE BEAUTIFUL TRUTH THAT YOUR SAVIOUR CAN RELATE.



Thirty

3

He is Risen

Read Mark 16.

In some ways Mark is unfinished. Many Bibles include a note that the earliest manuscripts don't go beyond verses 9-20. As Mark started his book by jumping right into the action, he finishes with this crucial piece of information:

“Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him” (v6).

This is not His end. And it doesn't have to be ours either. Whatever situation we find ourselves in, we know Jesus has gone before us and conquered the ultimate enemy — death.

He took on the most horrible death and won. We can have hope. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

We can leave this 30-day journey knowing that there is hope in the darkest of situations. When the world seems to be crashing down around us, Jesus is already victorious.

Mark leaves us on a cliff-hanger. And we are encouraged to go out. Jesus has shown many powerful signs through Mark. He has challenged us and pushed us to live in a kingdom way. The emphasis is now on us to go into all the world and proclaim the kingdom.

“And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs” (v20). Mark passes the work on to Jesus' disciples — you and me.

As we end this devotional, the work of Jesus is far from finished in our lives. What does His resurrection mean for the way I live? What can I commit to do for Him in the year ahead? Who am I discipling, and who am I being disciplined by?

**COMMIT TO PRAY FOR THREE OTHER PEOPLE
AND COMMIT TO SHARE WITH SOMEONE THIS
WEEK THE JOY OF THE RISEN SAVIOUR.**





Greater Sydney

Greater Sydney Conference
185 Fox Valley Road,
Wahroonga NSW 2076
Telephone: (02) 9868 6522
sydney.adventist.org.au