

# HEALING INSIGHTS FROM *THE GOSPEL OF MARK*

## LESSON 1 – CHAPTER 1

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### 1. The Power of God's Word—in Relationship (Mark 1:1-3)

- **A relational gospel.** Mark's gospel begins with the testimony of others. Isaiah and John the Baptist prepare the way for Jesus' ministry.
- **Establishing confidence.** In order for optimal physical healing to occur in the doctor-patient relationship there needs to be confidence in the physician's skills. The same is true in the spiritual realm. One must have confidence in the one bearing witness, or the testimony is discounted. The fulfillment of Isaiah's words helps to demonstrate the reliability of his testimony—and the counsel of the Bible in general. Are you aware there are multiple prophecies of Christ's ministry that statisticians have concluded are so specific that they could have been fulfilled by no one but Jesus of Nazareth?
- **God sends a messenger.** What does a messenger imply? (Someone wants to communicate with you—and communicate in a personal way)

### 2. The Call to Repent (Mark 1:4-5)

- **Diagnosis comes before treatment.** Physicians of the body must diagnose a patient's malady before he/she will have any desire to change. Spiritually, the same applies. Although we may like to hear messages of comfort, when things are awry changes need to be made. A doctor who says "you are fine" when he knows you have cancer is neither a good physician nor your friend. We should expect no less from our spiritual leaders/advisors.
- **A call to repentance.** Why were they confessing their sins? Compare Luke 3:7-14. There John the Baptist was pointing out their sins. Note how in Luke 3:15 it is in the context of this caring "physician ministry" of properly diagnosing sin that the crowds wondered if John was the Messiah.
  - Who needs to repent?
  - Implicit in every call to repentance is the implication that it is possible to change.

### 3. A Surrendered, Disciplined, Temperate Life (Mark 1:6-8)

- **The diet of John the Baptist.** Some commentators believe that the "locusts" John ate are a reference to carob beans (from the locust tree family) rather than grasshoppers. Regardless of which interpretation is correct, he followed a very simple diet. What bearing does diet have on spirituality?
- **The social connection.** The prophet Malachi declares, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers..." (Mal 4:5-6, ESV). The call to restored social relations was implicit in the work of John the Baptist.

- Luke 1:17 connects this prophecy with the ministry of John the Baptist, revealing before his birth that “he shall go before him [the Lord; i.e., Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.
- In Matthew 17:10-13, Jesus makes it clear that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecies regarding “the return of Elijah” found in Malachi 4 as well as in Malachi 3:1. (“Elijah” translated from the Old Testament Hebrew appears as “Elias” in the King James Version when translated from the New Testament Greek)

#### 4. The Power of Affirmation (Mark 1:9-11)

- God speaks from heaven affirming the sonship of Jesus
  - How do you feel when you are publicly affirmed? What could you do today to affirm someone in some way?
  - How important is it for you to have the assurance of God’s acceptance? [Note: although Jesus never sinned (see 1 Peter 2:22), He was given this affirmation after He took the steps that every sinner is asked to take—including being baptized.]
- Power—as well as affirmation—is given to those who surrender... Jesus is given a special measure/manifestation of the Holy Spirit. That Jesus is controlled by the Holy Spirit is demonstrated in v.12 where the Holy Spirit impels Him to go into the wilderness.

#### 5. Dealing with Temptation (Mark 1: 12-13)

- God’s affirmation of Jesus in the preceding verses apparently spiritually sustains Jesus in the wilderness.
- Although Mark does not record it, Jesus fasted in the wilderness (see Matthew 4:2). Are there health implications to fasting?
  - Why do you think Mark doesn’t mention this aspect of Jesus’ wilderness ordeal—or all the details about Satan’s temptations?
  - Is it possible His focus was on Jesus in community?
- **The “Great Controversy” theme introduced.** When we are called by God and given the Holy Spirit, an unholy spirit that will fight against us. However, God’s Spirit is more powerful. Where do you see the “Great Controversy” in Mark 1?

#### 6. A Call to Repent in View in the Context of Bible Prophecy (Mark 1:14-15)

- Jesus gives the call to repent, speaking in the context of the “time being fulfilled.” What time was he speaking about? Daniel 9 provides a time prophecy that brings us down to the very time of Jesus baptism! That time prophecy gave a time limit to God’s plans for the Jewish people as a nation.
- How much “time” do we have today? Are there Bible prophecies that indicate we should be especially mindful of our need for repentance?
- We shouldn’t fear the call to repent: God is willing to give us the “gift of repentance.” Peter and some of the other apostles put it this way: “Him [Jesus] hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” (Acts 5:31, KJV).

- **Repentance as the key to a new lifestyle.** Again we see this emphasis on diagnosis as the key to things diverse as treating a disease, faithfully taking a medication, or changing a lifestyle.

## 7. Other Insights from Mark 1

- Mark 1:16-20 revisits the call for a surrendered, disciplined, temperate life. The healing message embodied in such a call centers on our need to surrender our desire to script out our own lives. Think about it, how many of us have undermined our own health in either the spiritual, physical, or emotional realms by trying to hold on in part to our own desires—and not be wholly committed to the optimal lifestyle to which we are called?
- The Greek word *euthus* occurs repeatedly in Mark. It is typically translated “immediately.” It occurs in the following verses in chapter 1: 10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, and 42. Why does Mark use this word so often? Could it be that:
  - the word *euthus* when applied to Jesus’s words and activities suggests that when He speaks or acts things happen immediately? If this is the case, are there ways to allow Jesus to work in our lives today—in ways that bring such quick results?
  - the word *euthus* when applied to that which happened to Jesus suggests that His life played out at a rapid pace? There was not much leisure time during Jesus’ days of ministry. If this is the case, what does this observation say about how Jesus did not buckle under the strain of a demanding life?
    - Does Jesus give us any indication He is willing to help us to have such an experience in our lives?
    - Consider these words found in Matthew’s gospel: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Mt 11:28–30, ESV).
  - Consider the use of *euthus* in Mark 1:18. Look at the account to this point. Why immediacy is so important: in following God, in repenting, etc.?
- Note the insight into Jesus’ devotional life found in Mark 1:35.
  - Getting strength from God by having a personal experience with God.
  - How can you have a personal devotional life?
  - What can you do in the next week to deepen your devotional life?
- Community. Jesus calls disciples into community—they then go into the community of the synagogue and the village. What does this say about the value of social support?
- What are the key elements of Jesus ministry in Mark 1? They seem to transcend merely teaching and preaching. Jesus also meets people’s needs; He is involved with healing (note especially Jesus own description of His ministry in v. 38-39). What does this say about how practical Christianity should be? Is it possible our exposure to Christianity has not been an encounter with the “real thing” if we haven’t seen a religion concerned about helping people in their practical areas of need?