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# THE LOOKOUT

APRIL 2023

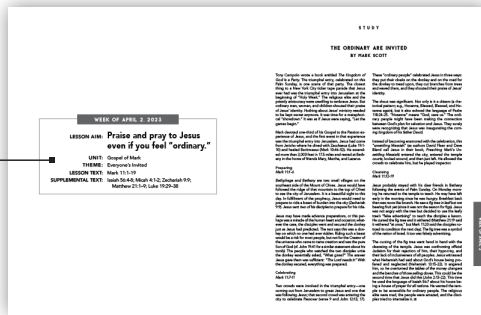
## Unit: Gospel of Mark

### Theme: Everyone's Invited

**Overview:** Reading the Gospel of Mark is like preparing for the arrival of company. The fast-moving Messiah of Mark's Gospel was getting his house (kingdom) ready for a wide assortment of guests. Jesus wanted everyone in his kingdom—the ordinary, the nations, sinners, the hurting, and even you. Students will want to give Jesus their RSVP.

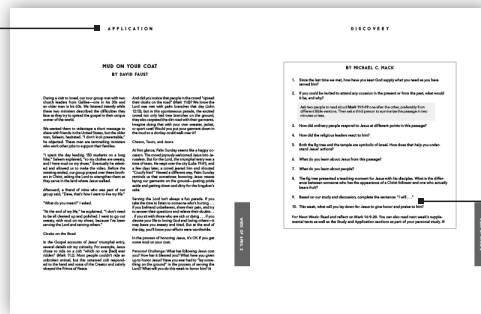
## HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



**Tabs** indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF APRIL 9, 2023

**LESSON AIM:** **Take Jesus' invitation to others, no matter what their background.**

**UNIT:** Gospel of Mark

**THEME:** Everyone's Invited

**LESSON TEXT:** Mark 16:9-20

**SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT:** Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:13-35; John 20:11-18, 24-29; Acts 1:9-11; 28:1-6

## ALL NATIONS ARE INVITED

BY MARK SCOTT

Jesus gave five commission statements, and he is serious in them being fulfilled. In Matthew he said to “make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19). In Mark he said to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15). In Luke/Acts he said to announce “forgiveness . . . to all nations” and take the witness to the “ends of the earth” (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). In John he sent his disciples into the world as the Father had sent him (John 20:21). Even the “barbarous people” of Malta were to receive the gospel (Acts 28:2, *King James Version*). On this Easter Sunday, the church needs to remember that it has the best of the good news to share. The church dares not be stingy with it.

Intellectual honesty demands accurate work with this famous passage. The original documents that became our New Testament were produced by hand and subsequently were hand copied. God ensured that the message he wanted the church to have was preserved by inspiration. But that does not mean no differences existed in those ancient copies. Sometimes scribes or others in the early church added true stories from the ministry of Jesus that the original author did not write into some of the manuscripts (e.g., John 7:53—8:11). The textual support (i.e., the science of comparing manuscripts to determine their accuracy) of our lesson text is stronger than in some other passages (as the one mentioned above), but still it is weak.

Bruce Metzger observed that this passage has six textual variants within it. He states, “Thus, on the basis of good external evidence and strong internal considerations it appears that the earliest ascertainable form of the Gospel of Mark ended with 16:8” (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 126).

**Multiple Appearances**

Mark 16:9-14

One of the many evidences of the resurrection of Jesus is the independent and corporate eyewitness testimonies of people who saw Jesus alive. While the Gospel writers seemed to have made little attempt to harmonize their works (which gave them even greater authenticity), there existed between them a collaboration of the truth of the resurrection.

Mark mentioned that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene on the morning of the resurrection. John’s testimony said the same (John 20:1-2, 11-18). Her testimony

was not believed even though Peter and John ran to the tomb and saw that Jesus was not in it (John 20:3-9). Mark also recorded that Jesus appeared to two others as they *were walking in the country*. Luke’s testimony said the same (Luke 24:13-35). This testimony was likewise not believed. Mark said that Jesus *appeared to the Eleven as they were eating*. John’s testimony said the same (John 20:19-29). Once again, refusal and hardness of heart kept the disciples from belief. This fit with Mark’s theme of no one really “getting Jesus.”

**Nuanced Commission**

Mark 16:15-18

Each of the five commission statements from Jesus are nuanced in the thematic direction of the individual Gospel writers. This is true of Mark’s Gospel. Mark is the only Gospel to mention miraculous signs as part of the missionary enterprise of the church. That fits with the fact that 31 percent of Mark’s Gospel centers on miracles.

Jesus commanded the disciples to “*go into all the world [kosmos] and preach the gospel to all creation.*” It is a global commission statement that concerns all peoples. Those who believe this gospel (Mark 1:14-15) and follow that belief in baptism *will be saved*. Obviously since the Bible teaches believer’s baptism, if belief is not embraced, then no belief/baptism equals condemnation.

Five miracles attended the earliest disciples (vv. 17-18); with one exception, all occur in Acts. The disciples would drive out demons—similar to the seven that the Lord cast out of Mary Magdalene. They would speak in tongues (Acts 2; 10; 19). They would pick up snakes and not be harmed (Acts 28). They would drink poison and not be hurt (no record of this). They would heal people (Mark 6:13; Acts 3; 8; 9; 13; 14; 20; 28).

**One Ascension**

Mark 16:19-20

The ascension of Christ is an important doctrine in the New Testament, especially for Luke and the writer of Hebrews (Luke 24; Acts 1; Hebrews 1; 2; 4; 9; 10). But Mark also mentioned it. Jesus was *taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God*. In obedience to Jesus, the disciples *went out and preached everywhere*, and the miracles gave evidence of the truth of their message. All the nations are invited to the Easter message and to the risen Christ. ■

## APPLICATION

### BUT SOME DOUBTED

BY DAVID FAUST

Here's an interesting detail about Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. All four Gospels mention there were doubters after Jesus rose from the dead.

Don't misunderstand. We call these books *Gospels* precisely because they confidently announce the good news that Christ died and came back to life again. All four Gospels present Jesus' death and resurrection as historical facts, confirmed by multiple eyewitnesses. And the Lord's post-resurrection appearances weren't fleeting glimpses but in some cases involved prolonged conversations and meals eaten with others. The reality of Jesus' resurrection was confirmed by "many convincing proofs that he was alive" (Acts 1:3).

But despite all the evidence, some individuals were difficult to convince.

#### Doubters Among the Disciples

John recounts the story of the famous skeptic Jesus told, "Stop doubting and believe" (John 20:27), but Thomas wasn't the only person who found the resurrection hard to accept. According to Luke, when the apostles first heard about the empty tomb, they "did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense" (Luke 24:11); and later, when the Lord showed them his hands and feet, "they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement" (v. 41). Mark's Gospel says the Lord "rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen" (Mark 16:14).

And Matthew's account says, "When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted" (Matthew 28:17). Are you surprised to find that verse tucked in right before the Great Commission where Jesus says to make disciples of all nations and baptize them? It's a little unsettling to find doubters mixed with worshipers at this climactic point in Jesus' ministry.

Why did they doubt? Jesus predicted his own resurrection multiple times (for example, in Matthew 16:21; 17:23),

but when this granddaddy of all miracles happened, was it more than his followers' minds could handle? Were they confused by the rumor circulating among the Jews that Jesus' body was stolen from the tomb (Matthew 28:12-15)? Did life after death simply seem too good to be true?

#### Gentleness and Respect

Still today, when we gather on Easter to celebrate the resurrection, doubters mingle with the worshipers. Bright-colored spring clothes can't cover up the darkness many of our neighbors carry in their hearts. Some never think much about faith, while others ask serious questions about God, but haven't found satisfying answers. Life has treated them harshly, so they wonder if God is harsh. Or they have found the Bible difficult to understand, so they have given up reading it.

Some people show up at an Easter service to fulfill an obligation or continue a family tradition, but they don't agree with the preacher's words. Yet, they come and listen to our sermons and songs. These doubters mixed with the worshipers are harassed and hurting—sheep without a shepherd who need the gospel more than they realize.

Easter provides a unique opportunity for us to "be merciful to those who doubt" (Jude 22) and explain the reasons for our hope "with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). Every day, we rub shoulders with precious souls God designed to be worshipers, but who wrestle with doubt, discouragement, and defeat. For their sake, may our faith be authentic and our lives magnetic, overflowing with resurrection hope.

**Personal Challenge:** This week, reach out to a friend, neighbor, co-worker, or classmate who doesn't go to church. Ask them to have lunch or coffee with you or invite them to join you for services at your church" **L**

*David Faust serves as senior associate minister with East 91st Street Christian Church in Indianapolis.*

## DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. Over the past week, what have you laid down for Jesus to give honor and praise to him?
2. How did your family celebrate Resurrection Sunday (Easter) when you were a child?
  - What was most special about it?

Ask two people to read aloud **Mark 16:9-20** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to summarize the passage as if telling it to a middle schooler.

3. What stands out to you most in this brief summary of Jesus' resurrection, Great Commission, and ascension?
4. What do Jesus' multiple appearances (three in this passage) tell you about Jesus' resurrection?
5. What do you learn about Jesus from this passage?
  - What do you learn about yourself?
6. Both Mary Magdalene and the two disciples "walking in the country" (v. 12) saw the resurrected Jesus and then reported that to Jesus' other disciples. How do you account for the fact that the other disciples did not believe these witnesses at first?
7. Imagine you are talking with a family member, friend, or co-worker who is skeptical that Jesus rose from the dead. How would you use this or other Bible passages to share your belief in his resurrection?
8. Jesus gave a direct command (v. 15). How will you obey it this week?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."
10. What do you need most from God as you go into the world and preach the good news?

**For Next Week:** Read and reflect on **Mark 2:1-17**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■