

S T U D Y   G U I D E



W. ROBERT GODFREY

*FOLLOWING*  
**JESUS**

THE GOSPEL *of* MARK

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# Following Jesus

## The Gospel of Mark

W. Robert Godfrey



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

*Renew your Mind.*

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# Introduction

The gospel of Mark lays out a vivid, swift, and dense narrative of Jesus' ministry. But often when we read the Gospels, we don't pick up on how they are organized and may think of them as stringing together one unconnected event after another. In this teaching series, Dr. W. Robert Godfrey takes a fresh look at the oldest gospel, giving keen insights into Mark's intent, structure, and message. As we follow Jesus through Mark's gospel, we catch a magnificent glimpse at His life, hearing the call to follow Him and, by God's Spirit, heeding the call to follow Him.

This study guide is a companion to the video teaching series. Whether you are using the DVDs, streaming the videos on Ligonier.org, or going through the course in Ligonier Connect, this resource is designed to help you make the most of the learning experience. For each message in the series, there is a corresponding lesson in this guide. Here is what you will find in each lesson:

INTRODUCTION	<p>The introduction is a brief paragraph that summarizes the content covered in the lecture and considered in the study guide lesson.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use the introduction to each lesson to get a sense of the big picture before watching the video. Refer to these statements as you work through the study guide to remind yourself of what you have already covered and where you are headed.</p>
LEARNING GOALS	<p>The learning goals are the knowledge and skills that the study guide lesson will endeavor to equip you with as you work through the lecture content.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Familiarize yourself with the goals of each lesson before engaging its contents. Keeping the overall purpose in mind as you watch each video and reflect on or discuss the questions will help you get the most out of each lesson.</p>
KEY IDEAS	<p>The key ideas are the major points or takeaways from the lecture.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use these ideas to prepare yourself for each lesson and to review previous lessons. They describe specifically the knowledge that each lecture is communicating.</p>
REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	<p>The questions are the guided reflection and/or discussion component of the lesson that is intended to help you prepare for, process, and organize what you are learning.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Reflect on individually or discuss in a group the questions in the order in which they appear in the lesson. The time stamps in the right margin indicate where the answers to questions during the video can be found.</p>

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PRAYER	<p>The prayer section offers suggestions for how to close the lesson in prayer with respect to what was taught in the lecture.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Consider using each lesson's prayer section as a guide to personal or group prayer. These sections follow the ACTS prayer model, which you can learn more about in R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions booklet <i>Does Prayer Change Things?</i> This helpful guide is available as a free e-book at <a href="http://Ligonier.org">Ligonier.org</a>.</p>
REVIEW QUIZ	<p>The review quiz is a set of six multiple-choice questions that appears at the end of each lesson.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use each quiz to check your comprehension and memory of the major points covered in each lecture. It will be most beneficial to your learning if you take a lesson's quiz either sometime between lessons or just before you begin the next lesson in the study guide.</p>
ANSWER KEY	<p>The answer key provides explanations for the reflection and discussion questions and answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review quiz.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use the answer key to check your own answers or when you do not know the answer. Note: Do not give in too quickly; struggling for a few moments to recall an answer reinforces it in your mind.</p>

# Study Schedules

The following table suggests four plans for working through the *Following Jesus* video teaching series and this companion study guide. Whether you are going through this series on your own or with a group, these schedules should help you plan your study path.

	Extended 28-Week Plan	Standard 26-Week Plan	Abbreviated 13-Week Plan	Intensive 9-Week Plan
Week	Lesson			
1	*	1	1 & 2	1–3
2	1	2	3 & 4	4–6
3	2	3	5 & 6	7–9
4	3	4	7 & 8	10–12
5	4	5	9 & 10	13–15
6	5	6	11 & 12	16–18
7	6	7	13 & 14	19–21
8	7	8	15 & 16	22–24
9	8	9	17 & 18	25–26
10	9	10	19 & 20	
11	10	11	21 & 22	
12	11	12	23 & 24	
13	12	13	25 & 26	
14	13	14		
15	14	15		
16	15	16		
17	16	17		
18	17	18		

	Extended 28-Week Plan	Standard 26-Week Plan	Abbreviated 13-Week Plan	Intensive 9-Week Plan
Week	Lesson			
19	18	19		
20	19	20		
21	20	21		
22	21	22		
23	22	23		
24	23	24		
25	24	25		
26	25	26		
27	26			
28	*			

\* For these weeks, rather than completing lessons, spend your time discussing and praying about your learning goals for the study (the first week) and the most valuable takeaways from the study (the last week).

# A Unique Gospel

## INTRODUCTION

The gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels, but why did Mark write in such a spartan, fast-paced manner? What was his goal, and how does his style and structure reflect it? In this lesson, Dr. Godfrey gives an overview of Mark's gospel by explaining Mark's unique perspective on the life and ministry of Jesus.

## LEARNING GOALS

When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to:

- Understand chiasms and their importance to the gospel of Mark
- Identify the distinctive aspects of Mark's writing style
- Know the goal and central point of Mark's gospel

## KEY IDEAS

- Mark's gospel is built around a chiastic literary structure.
- The gospel of Mark is brief and abrupt but also vivid and thoughtful.
- Mark is chiefly about faith and the power of the gospel to save and encourage disciples of Christ.



## REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Before the Video

#### *What Do You Think?*

Take a moment to answer the following questions. They will prepare you for the lecture.

- Why is it important to have the gospel written and not just passed down by word of mouth? How has having the written Word affected your life?
- What has stuck out to you about Mark's gospel in the past? How is it different from the other gospels?

#### *Scripture Reading*

*These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

—John 20:31

- What can the Word produce in those who hear it?

### During the Video

Answer the following questions while you watch the video. They will guide you through the lecture.

#### *Chiastic Structure*

0:00–9:39

- What is a chiasm? How does Dr. Godfrey explain chiasms?
- Why is the gospel of Mark so short? Why did Mark construct such a fast-paced narrative?

#### *Style and Aim*

9:39–24:14

- What are some of the standout elements of Mark's writing?

- How does Mark challenge his readers to go beyond a simple, surface reading of the text?
- To whom is Mark writing? How does this goal shape the overall aim of the work?

### After the Video

Answer the following questions after you have finished the lecture. They will help you identify and summarize the major points.

- How does Mark use chiasms to illustrate his main points? What do chiasms help show? What kind of information do they not show?

If you are in a group, have the members reflect on ways that chapter and verse divisions can be both helpful and unhelpful. Ask: What are the benefits of a more natural approach to division, such as chiasms?

- What does it mean that Mark goes “beyond the simple immediate truth”? How do Mark’s small details help fill in the larger message of his gospel?

If you are in a group, have the members skim the gospel of Mark, using the chapter and section titles to guide them. Ask: What major themes do you see in the gospel?

- Why is the gospel not one of the “stories that trap us”? What does it do instead?

If you are in a group, have the members give an example of how the gospel has liberated an aspect of their lives. Ask: How does God promise to liberate you from the stories of your past that attempted to trap you?

### PRAYER

Commit what you have learned from God’s Word in this lesson to prayer.

- Praise God for revealing Himself in Scripture and in His Son, Jesus Christ.
- Confess the ways that you may have taken familiar books of the Bible for granted.
- Thank God for preserving the good news of Jesus Christ in His Word so that you heard it and, by the working of His Spirit, believed.
- Ask God to continue sanctifying you by His Spirit through the truth of the gospel.

## REVIEW QUIZ

Use these multiple-choice questions to measure what you learned from this lesson.

1. What frequent expression characterizes Mark's fast-paced writing style?
  - a. Suddenly
  - b. Immediately
  - c. It came to pass
  - d. Now
2. How does Mark use Isaiah in the opening of his gospel?
  - a. He quotes Isaiah but inserts part of Malachi to contextualize it.
  - b. He quotes Isaiah but inserts part of Haggai to prove that Jesus is the Lord.
  - c. He quotes only Isaiah to prove that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament.
  - d. He quotes only Isaiah but misquotes the referenced text.
3. How many sections does Dr. Godfrey divide Mark into?
  - a. Eight
  - b. Nine
  - c. Eleven
  - d. Sixteen
4. What are some examples of Mark's vivid style of writing?
  - a. His description of Jesus' face as "shining like the sun" in the transfiguration
  - b. The way that he describes the loaves as "large" in the feeding of the five thousand
  - c. His addition of "wild animals" to Jesus' temptation in the wilderness
  - d. Both a and c
5. The chapter divisions of the Bible are inspired by the Holy Spirit, but the verses are not.
  - a. True
  - b. False
6. What is the main virtue that Mark is looking to inspire in his audience?
  - a. Love
  - b. Hope
  - c. Courage
  - d. Faith

# Answer Key—A Unique Gospel

## REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Before the Video

#### *What Do You Think?*

These are personal questions. The answers should be based on your own knowledge and experience.

#### *Scripture Reading*

- What can the Word produce in those who hear it?

*God's Word is the primary means that the Holy Spirit uses to produce faith in His people because "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17), which is why John mentions that the purpose of his gospel is that readers might believe in Christ and have "life in his name" (John 20:31).*

### During the Video

#### *Chiastic Structure*

- What is a chiasm? How does Dr. Godfrey explain chiasms?

*Chiasms are an ancient literary device that organizes information in a way that helps readers to remember it. Dr. Godfrey compares it to an upside-down pyramid, in which each step up the pyramid corresponds to an opposite step down the pyramid, culminating in a single focal point that is the key part of the chiastic structure.*

- Why is the gospel of Mark so short? Why did Mark construct such a fast-paced narrative?

*Mark's gospel is short because he wants to convey information in a "laser-like way," focusing only on what he wants to tell us about the life of Jesus. His narrative is very fast-paced to highlight the specific details of Christ's life with thoughtful intentionality.*

#### *Style and Aim*

- What are some of the standout elements of Mark's writing?

*Mark's writing is extremely vivid, abrupt, and elusive. He gives many one-of-a-kind details in his gospel that help bolster the overall message that he is trying to convey. He also tends to abruptly start and stop his writing, so focused on essential details of the gospel that he rarely makes a full transition. Additionally, he is elusive by constantly hinting at and referencing things behind and beyond what's written.*

- How does Mark challenge his readers to go beyond a simple, surface reading of the text?

*By alluding to other Scripture and further truths beyond the immediacy of his gospel, Mark makes many connections that force readers to dig deeper into his writing to find profound details that are not immediately apparent. He does this in the prologue where he quotes Isaiah, hinting that Isaiah's messianic prophecy is being fulfilled in Christ without stating it overtly.*

- To whom is Mark writing? How does this goal shape the overall aim of the work?

*Mark is writing to people who already believe the gospel but may not know specific details of Jesus' life. Because this is his audience, he primarily writes to encourage these believers, strengthen their faith in Christ, and reveal more about Christ's message to them.*

#### After the Video

- How does Mark use chiasms to illustrate his main points? What do chiasms help show? What kind of information do they not show?

*Mark uses chiasms to organize his information into compact but profound groupings and emphasize certain themes of his gospel. Chiasms work as a tool that prop up already existing themes in the text. They can highlight focal points or major redemptive-historical events, but they do not reveal any secret doctrines; "the 'what' of the gospel will remain absolutely the same."*

- What does it mean that Mark goes "beyond the simple immediate truth"? How do Mark's small details help fill in the larger message of his gospel?

*Going beyond the simple and immediate truth does not mean compromising on the truth; rather, it means that the factual and physical events of the gospel point to big-picture spiritual realities that accompany or are fulfilled in Jesus' miracles and earthly ministry. An example is Jesus' healing Peter's mother-in-law, which points to the larger theme of resurrection and helps us to place our faith in Christ and the reality of the resurrection.*

- Why is the gospel not one of the "stories that trap us"? What does it do instead?

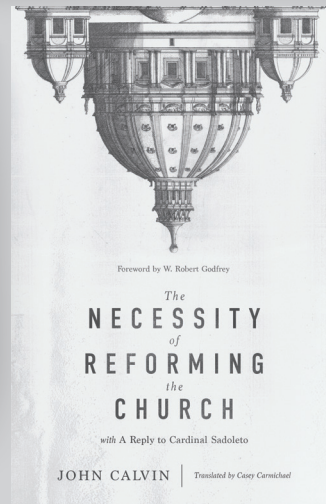
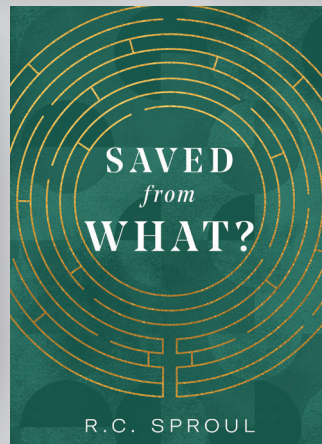
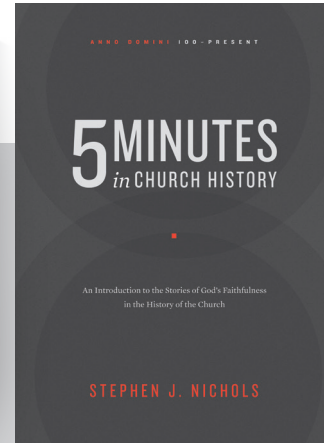
*The gospel is not a story that traps us because it saves God's people. Dr. Godfrey recounted a story about a woman who said, "There are stories that save us and stories that trap us." The gospel, the historical record of the life of Jesus Christ, is the type of story that liberates us from the stories that we have told ourselves or have been told by others that tend to trap us. The gospel liberates us from falsehood and also sad truths about our lives, setting us free in truth and faith in Christ.*

## REVIEW QUIZ

1. **B.**  
*Mark frequently uses the word “immediately” to transition from one event to another. As Dr. Godfrey noted in the lecture, this is meant to establish an idea of “rapid movement” throughout the entirety of his gospel.*
2. **A.**  
*While Mark does use Isaiah to imply the fact that Jesus is God and the Lord of the Old Testament, he does so with the help of a quotation from Malachi to explain the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus.*
3. **B.**  
*Dr. Godfrey divides Mark into nine sections, following his chiastic method. The first four sections parallel the last four sections, with both centering on a single point. This is completely distinct from our modern sixteen-chapter division.*
4. **C.**  
*Mark adds the detail of wild animals’ being with Jesus in the wilderness to describe how the place where He was tempted was truly a wilderness. The other examples are not found in Mark’s gospel.*
5. **B.**  
*While modern chapter and verse divisions can be helpful, they are a later addition to the Bible to simplify citation. Therefore, neither of these tools was inspired, as the original manuscripts were.*
6. **D.**  
*Mark is ultimately looking for people to have faith and to be strengthened in their faith in God. Although this is not in opposition to hope, courage, and love, it is more prominently the main goal of his gospel.*



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