



## NG Study Guide: Mark 1:1-13 “Preparation” [1.10.21]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

### The Study

**Thesis: Preparation** is the action or process of making ready or being made ready for use or consideration. In this portion of Scripture, we are going to hear God the Father say to God the Son, “*You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” [11]. The Father spoke and affirmed Jesus’ identity as God’s beloved Son whom always pleases God the Father. Consider this idea, you can be prepared so that you too can bring great joy and be pleasing to God. What a wonderful reality. Today we’ll consider the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, and discover how to be prepared to live for Jesus, and thus please God.

**Gospel of Mark Overview:** The author is John Mark, John being his Jewish name and Mark his Latin. His cousin is Barnabas, a very influential leader in the early Church who paved the way for Paul to have great influence in the ministry to the Gentile world. Peter was Mark’s primary source for his account. Mark traveled as a young man with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but returned home when opposition became very intense [Ac. 13:13]. Paul refused to bring Mark with them as they prepared a return trip. So, Mark went with Barnabas to a different area [Ac. 15:36-40]. Mark was later restored in ministry with Paul in Rome [Col. 4:10], and Paul sent for Mark shortly before his execution noting how useful Mark had become [2Tim. 4:11]. The early church met in Mark’s mother’s home in Jerusalem [Ac. 12:12]. Mark’s life is a wonderful testimony of the transforming power of one who is prepared to live for Jesus, and thus prepared to please God.

Mark’s Gospel was **written to show Christ as the One who came to serve humanity and gave His life so that we could live [Mk. 10:44-45]** (Cf. John – Deity, Luke – humanity, Matthew – promised Messiah). As we consider the theme that Jesus came to serve, rather than be served, how have you served in a local church, and/or how would you like to serve in this coming season?

It is likely the first of the four Gospel accounts, and was written about 57 A.D. The style is quick paced. The word “immediately” occurs over 40 times. The focus is Christ’s works more than words, and actions more than sermons.

#### 1. Prepared to follow [1-7]

*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it is written in the Prophets: “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.” <sup>3</sup>“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.’” <sup>4</sup>John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. <sup>5</sup>Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate*

*locusts and wild honey.* <sup>7</sup> And he preached, saying, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.

Mark’s *beginning* of the *gospel* or good news of *Jesus Christ*, starts as Jesus is about to begin His earthly ministry. There is no genealogy, nor account of His childhood or early life. He is the *Christ*, or Messiah, Anointed One, and the *Son of God* [1]. Verse two quotes Is. 40:3, to note that John the Baptist was fulfilling prophecy as God’s messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah [3]. John was the first Prophet in the 400 years between the Old and New Testaments.

*Make His paths straight* [3] related to the historical practice of preparing roads for a king’s arrival by removing obstacles like fallen trees, or fixing potholes. In a post-modern culture, where relativism reigns, and there are increased divisions there may be many obstacles to remove so that people can respond to Jesus and His gospel.

John’s ministry was in the southern part of Israel in the Judean wilderness [4] where the Jordan River ultimately empties into the Salt or Dead Sea. John was proclaiming the need to repent [4], or turn from rebellion against God. John was proclaiming that Messiah was coming and people needed to get ready and get right with God by receiving Jesus the Christ to be forgiven of sin. Jews came from Jerusalem and the southern region called Judea, and were baptized by John and confessed their sins [5]. This was humbling and evidence of repentance. Jews generally baptized themselves, and Gentiles were baptized by another when they came to faith in the true and living God. Thus, Jews were humbly confessing their need for God’s forgiveness. In effect, Jews were declaring their need to restore their relationship with God.

Consider the dynamic of God’s covenant people the Jews publicly declaring that they had not followed God as closely as they should or could. In effect they were saying that they were no better than Gentiles (non-Jews) and people outside of a covenant relationship with God. This would be akin to people in our culture who identify as Christians, humbly recognizing that their attitudes and actions were not much different than unbelievers, and thus they were not really living for Jesus and following as closely as they needed to, and publicly declaring their repentance.

John was *clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey* [6] similar to how the Prophet Elijah, who previously called Israel to repent, was clothed [2Ki. 1:8]. John proclaimed, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose [7]. The removal of sandals was the task of the lowliest of servants. John was humbly declaring that the One he pointed to deserved all glory and praise, and that his role as messenger was to simply point people to Him and prepare the way for them to come into relationship with Jesus. John’s declaration was not a self-deprecating cliché or platitude, he had the spiritual maturity and intimacy with God to realize that it is all about Jesus. This humility is even more remarkable when you contemplate that John’s ministry was so popular and his presence was so powerful that many people thought he was the Messiah [Jn. 1:20].

***How would you like to follow Jesus differently in 2021? How are you preparing to follow?***

## **2. Prepared by the Spirit [8-11]**

<sup>8</sup> *I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.* <sup>9</sup> *It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan.* <sup>10</sup> *And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.* <sup>11</sup> *Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* The Christian life is intellectual, and emotional, but is essentially a spiritual experience. John’s baptism was with water as a symbol of repentance, but Jesus will *baptize you with the Holy Spirit* [8]. **What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit?** The filling or baptism of the Spirit [Ac. 1:4-8] is the power for Christian living, and relates to yielding to God’s authority. We need the baptism of the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus and live for Him. Human discipline is inadequate for the task [Lu.24:49].

Jesus went *from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan* [9]. Why was Jesus, who never sinned, baptized? To identify with humanity, to be an example to us, to symbolize His submission to the Father, and to display His anointing of the Holy Spirit [10]. As Jesus came up from the water, the Spirit descended upon Jesus [10]; and the Father spoke and affirmed Jesus' identity as God's beloved Son whom always pleases God the Father [11].

***Contemplate the idea that you can bring great joy and be pleasing to God. How might you feel knowing that God is pleased with you, because you are following Jesus, prepared by His Spirit, and are making progress overcoming temptation?***

### **3. Prepared for temptation [12-13]**

<sup>12</sup> *Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.*

As soon as the Spirit had come upon Jesus at His baptism, the *Spirit drove Him into the wilderness* [12]. Again, this is the desert wilderness of southern Israel. In Israel's exodus from Egypt and journey to the Promised Land, we discover that the wilderness is a place of testing, and proving dependence upon the Father [Deut. 8:2].

As noted by Matthew, the Spirit led Jesus to the wilderness to be tempted by the devil [Matt. 4:1]. Jesus had fasted forty days and nights when the tempter came. In the Bible, the number forty is generally associated with testing. For example the rains of Noah's flood lasted forty days, the leaders who examined the Promised Land scouted the area for forty days, and Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years before entering the Promised Land [Gen. 7:12, Num. 14:34]. It is also Matthew who reveals that Jesus responded to each temptation – physical comfort, fame and influence, and power by rebutting each temptation with Scripture [Matt. 4:2-11].

Then the devil left Jesus, and behold angels came and ministered to Him [13, Matt. 4:12]. It is Luke who adds that when the devil had ended every temptation he departed from Him until an opportune time [Lu. 4:13]. The devil is always looking for an opportune time to tempt us in an effort to draw us away from God.

Why does the Spirit lead Jesus to be tempted? First, it is an example to us that despite receiving the Spirit we will be tempted. Second, we discover the need of the Spirit and knowledge of the Scriptures to overcome temptation. Third, we discover that although Jesus was tempted, that He passed the test, and did not sin. Thus, He could be a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Testing and temptation are part of life as a follower of Jesus, the issue is how we respond. We need to be prepared. We need the power of the Spirit and knowledge of the Bible, and we thank God for His perfect sacrifice, grace, and pray for progress in the battle with our flesh, the world and the devil.

***Contemplate the idea that you can bring great joy and be pleasing to God. How might you feel knowing that God is pleased with you, because you are following Jesus, prepared by His Spirit, and are making progress overcoming temptation?***

*As we consider the theme that Jesus came to serve, rather than be served, how have you served in a local church, and/or how would you like to serve in this coming season? For info, go to [Serve.calvarynexus.org](http://Serve.calvarynexus.org).*

### **Study Guide Qs**

***Q1. As we consider the theme that Jesus came to serve, rather than be served, how have you served in a local church, and/or how would you like to serve in this coming season? For info, go to [Serve.calvarynexus.org](http://Serve.calvarynexus.org).***

***Q2. How would you like to follow Jesus differently in 2021? How are you preparing to follow?***

**Q3. How have you experienced the work of God's Spirit to empower and enable you to follow Jesus?**

**Q4. Contemplate the idea that you can bring great joy and be pleasing to God. How does it feel knowing that God is pleased with you, because you are following Jesus, prepared by His Spirit, and are making progress overcoming temptation?**

**“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)**

**1. Read through the Gospel of Mark. Get a sense of the life and ministry of Jesus as recorded by Mark.**

**2. Here is a brief and wonderful overview video of Mark's Gospel provided by The Bible Project:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGHqu9-DtXk>

**Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:**

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?

3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

**Consider how you can get involved, perhaps with others in your NG, to serve in your local church or a para-church organization, as well as serving neighbors where you live, work, study or play.**

**Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:**

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?

2. What might we do about that need to help?

**Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

**Leader Notes:**

**1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

**2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.

**3. The “Digging Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Digging Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

**4. Every time you meet consider asking:**

**a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.