

# A PORTRAIT OF JESUS

## A MONTH LONG STUDY BOOKLET

### **PREFACE**

Jesus Christ lived an amazing and astounding life, and was an awesome teacher. In 3 years time he was able to completely change 11 young men, in their understanding of love and life, of God and his purposes for their lives. In 3 years he was able to equip them with the ability to turn their world upside down, and to disciple men. His life was infinitely complex in that there are undoubtedly countless reasons why he said and did the things he did.

He used many different methods to teach. Often he would teach a lesson by preaching, teaching, telling a story or admonishing someone. Then he would go and do by example what he was teaching. He would teach that we should be merciful -- then turn around and heal a man of leprosy.

Jesus, (Greek) and Joshua, (the Hebrew equivalent) mean Yahweh is Salvation. Christ, (Greek), and Messiah, (Hebrew) mean The Anointed One or Yahweh Delivered. Christ was his title, a term that compounds all the hopes of the Old Testament prophets. But beyond that, what kind of man was he?

It is our hope that over the next month with Jesus, you can grow to know this Redeemer in a more intimate way. Discovering some of the character qualities and personality traits that make up this astonishing Messiah, this Christ, this Jesus.

If you are unfamiliar with the events surrounding the births of John the Baptist and Jesus take some time to read from the book of Luke, chapters one and two before starting this study.

Spend a minute or two in prayer before each day's devotional. Ask God to reveal himself to you through this study of Mark, and express a sincere desire to grow in a relational knowledge with Jesus the Christ. Read the scripture passage that is associated with that day's devotion to remind you of the scenario and the context it takes place in.

On every page, space has been provided for journalizing thoughts you might have had for that day's devotion or about God and Jesus in general. Take a few extra minutes and use these spaces to record your thoughts.

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### **Mark 1: 1-12**

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

It is written in Isaiah the prophet:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" -- "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

**DAY 1 JESUS: SON OF GOD**  
**MARK 1:1,11**

That Jesus is the Son of God is indisputable in the Bible. Take some time to look up these references. In each passage, write down who declares Jesus to be the Son of God:

1. MARK 1:1 \_\_\_\_\_ DECLARES IT.
2. MARK 1:11 \_\_\_\_\_ DECLARES IT.
3. MATTHEW 4:3, 6 \_\_\_\_\_ ACKNOWLEDGES IT.
4. JOHN 1:34 \_\_\_\_\_ THE \_\_\_\_\_ TESTIFIES.
5. MAT 27:54 THE \_\_\_\_\_ WHO SAW HIM DIE TESTIFIES.
6. ROM 1:3-4 \_\_\_\_\_ DECLARES IT.
7. LUKE 1:32-35 AN \_\_\_\_\_ PROCLAIMS IT.
8. JOHN 10:36 \_\_\_\_\_ HIMSELF DECLARED IT.

The Pharisees understood that for Jesus to be the Son of God, would be placing him on an equal footing with God.

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5:16-18)

That he is the Son of God is a declaration of his deity, or in other words, Jesus is God. The Pharisees were unable to accept that he was God as he claimed to be, and so they persecuted him, and made plans to kill him. All of this happened in accordance with many prophecies from the old testament prophets, and the overall plan of God. For only God was able to provide salvation for us.

Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. (Is 59:15-16)

The first Characteristic we see about Jesus in the book of Mark is that he is God. This means that God himself chose to leave the glory of his throne to live as a man amongst his creation. Think about the implications that action brings to us as human beings. Our Creator, appalled that no one was capable to intervene in the plight of His people, who were going far from him, through the cares and concerns of their own every day lives, actually departed from his kingly throne, set aside his majestic arraignments and walked with mankind in order to reunite them with their Creator in person. (See Phil 2:5-11) That is why Jesus is sometimes called, Immanuel... which means... God with us.

What are some of the ways that you have gone far away from your creator in the past?  
(Work, Other Relationships, Material Things?)

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As you think about these things, write down your thoughts to the following question in the spaces provided in the study booklet.

Question: What does it mean to you to know Jesus as The Son of God?

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Answers to the fill in the blanks.

1. Mark declares it.
2. God declares it.
3. Satan acknowledges it.
4. John the Baptist testifies.
5. The centurion who saw him die testifies.
6. Paul declares it.
7. An Angel proclaims it.
8. Jesus himself declared it.

**DAY 2 JESUS: FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY**  
**MARK 1:2-3**

**It is written in Isaiah the prophet:** “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” – “a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

Long before his arrival, Jesus was prophesied about by many of the writers of the old testament. He has existed throughout eternity and as we looked at yesterday, is himself God. (See Is 11)

Many of the events of Jesus coming and life were predicted hundreds of years before his birth. Take some time to look up the following scriptures and record what specific event was predicted regarding his life.

1. Jeremiah 23:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Is 7:14 & chapter 9 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Micah 5:1-5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Is 53, and Psalm 22 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(For further study, see... Is 40:3-5; Ps 110:4; Zech 6:13 & 9; Gen 49:10; Ps 2; and Ps 16:7-11)

More exciting than just predicting the future, these fulfilled prophecies reveal to us that God is ultimately in control of life and the universe. It is a reassurance of the promise he made for "those who love him and are called according to his purposes", that he will cause all things to work for the good. We can live life free from worry over the events and circumstances we face from day to day knowing that God has a specific plan for our individual lives that he is working out for his glory.

Question: How does knowing that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy affect your faith and trust in Him for your life?

Use this space to reflect on that question, or write down your thoughts about this topic.

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**DAY 3 JESUS: HE WHO IS POWERFUL**  
**MARK 1:7**

John makes an interesting statement as he baptizes in the Jordan River. Go back and read the statement found in Mark 1:7. Write the statement in the blank that follows.

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Was this some sort of egotistical comment? What do you think John meant when he said this about Jesus?

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Usually, when we think of a man raised in the desert who wears camel hair clothing and subsists solely on a diet of locust and honey, the word "Powerful" doesn't enter into our mental picture. But Jesus said of John the Baptist that among men born of women there was none greater than he. Luke 7:28

John's life was also announced in advance by the Old Testament prophets. God had a unique and specific mission for John, to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah by softening their hearts and turning their eyes back towards God so they would be in eager anticipation of what would come next!

Just what we mean by saying Jesus is very powerful will also be better understood as we study the authority he had to heal, (Power over the natural), deliver, (Power over the supernatural), forgive sins, (Spiritual Authority).

But on earth he was a man whose very presence demanded contemplation and decisive action. With a phrase he could reach into the hearts of men and women and inspire them to leave everything they had to follow him.

Perhaps the greatest indication of his power though, was his ability to submit to crucifixion, even though he had the power to prevent it!

Use this space to journal some of your thoughts about this powerful Jesus.

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**DAY 4 JESUS: WORTHY, HONORED, MAJESTIC**  
**MARK 1:7**

And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, **the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.**

Again John alludes to another of Jesus attributes, that he is Majestic!

John states that he is not even worthy to stoop down and untie the Lord's sandal. This is an image of ultimate majesty. Everyone customarily bows down in the presence of the king or other royal members. Often royal figures had numerous servants that were born and trained to fulfill a certain need of the court such as the wine taster or baker. Sometimes they were even dressed and bathed by certain trusted servants.

But John stated that Jesus was so inordinately majestic that he was not even worthy enough to bow down and untie his sandals.

Even Pilot recognized Jesus' stately position to some extent, if only in mockery, when he placed the sign over his head at the crucifixion reading King of the Jews.

Jesus himself admitted he was a king but not of this world. John 18:33-37.

If Jesus is not a king of this world, what world do you think that Jesus was referring to? \_\_\_\_\_

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Isaiah 9:7 also indicates that the Christ was to be a king. Do you think that Jesus is that King now, or will he be one at some later time? \_\_\_\_\_

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Not only is he a king, but Paul declares that at the end of time, every nation, every tongue, will proclaim on bended knees that Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11

Since he is a king then, and more than that, the King of kings... who are his subjects? \_\_\_\_\_

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Are you one of his subjects? \_\_\_\_\_

How does one become a subject of the King of kings? \_\_\_\_\_

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What role does a king play in the life of his subjects? \_\_\_\_\_

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How can you worship this King of kings? \_\_\_\_\_

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Spend some time contemplating the kingship of Jesus Christ over your life. Use the space provided to journal any thoughts that come to your mind.

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**DAY 5 JESUS: BAPTIZER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**  
**MARK 1:8**

I baptize you with water, but **he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.**

When John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit, he knew what he was talking about from experience. He himself received the Holy Spirit while still in the womb, when he first entered into the presence of Jesus... (Jesus was in Mary's womb at the time!) See Luke 1:39-45

Read the following passages, and answer the questions that follow.

Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "*Abba*, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. --Galatians 4:6-7

1. According to this passage, whose spirit is the Holy Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What does it mean to you that God has made you an heir? \_\_\_\_\_

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Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. -- 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

3. What seems to be the goal of the Holy Spirit in our lives? \_\_\_\_\_

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Before Jesus arrived it was not possible to be "Baptized in the Holy Spirit", as we understand it today because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. Since then it is His spirit, he is the one who Baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

This is what the Bible refers to as "The Mystery of God, Christ in us." It is the presence of the living God within us that gives us power; power to be bold witnesses of Christ in the face of uncommon persecution or even death. Power to say no to sinful temptations and lifestyle choices that are not pleasing to God.

Have you experienced this kind of power that only comes from the Holy Spirit's presence within you? Jesus once stated that the Holy Spirit was a free gift to all who would ask him for it. Use the space provided to reflect on the Holy Spirit's role in your life, or what you'd like it to be.

**DAY 6: JESUS: SUBMISSIVE TO THE WILL OF GOD.  
MARK 1:9, 12**

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan... **At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert...**

The life of Christ epitomizes what it means to surrender our wills to God and what monumental results can be achieved by such a surrendered life. He never failed to obey the will of God, regardless of the personal, physical, or emotional price it may have cost him, and it cost him dearly.

He was a man with few physical possessions other than what he carried or wore. No place to lay his head. Constantly pressed by the ministerial needs around him. Regularly facing severe opposition from the religious leaders, spiritual forces and at times even his own family.

Read Mark 14:32-42

The Gethsemane scene is the paramount of Christ's submissiveness, knowing quite well what the next several hours held in store for him. Verses 33-36 vividly describe the mental and emotional anguish he went through in his struggle to be submissive to the end.

Have you ever been falsely accused of something, and punished for it in some way even though you were innocent?

The struggle that Jesus faced included an anguish that we can never fully understand. Christ was about to feel the weight of the entire world's sins. But unlike us, he had never before experienced sin himself. That is a perspective we cannot comprehend, and will never know how much agony he endured for doing so.

Thankfully, he did choose submissiveness, though as we discussed earlier, he had the power to change the course of events and save himself from it. Instead, he won the freedom for all who would accept the gift he gave and follow him submissively, in the example that he set for us with his life!

Question: What are some ways that you could practice living submissively to God in your life?

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Write a personal prayer to God expressing your desire to live submissively to him.

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**DAY 7: JESUS THE ONE WHO PLEASES GOD**  
**MARK 1:11**

And a voice came from heaven: **“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”**

At about the age of 30, a miraculous event occurred in Jesus' life. The very voice of God spoke audibly from the heavens to a great number of witnesses and affirmed to Jesus that God was well pleased with him. (See also Matthew 17:5)

We all get a wonderful feeling of pride and rightly so, when we receive a pat on the back or some form of recognition for a job well done. It is essential for our emotional well being to be praised for good work.

But it is another matter all together, to receive the praise of God.

Can you think of a difference between receiving the praise of men and the praise of God?

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In Ephesians 5:10, Paul admonishes us to "Find out what pleases the LORD", and consequently do those things. Nothing pleases God more than a soul who surrenders their will, heart's desires, actions and life to God through relationship with Jesus Christ. (See Luke Chapter 15) In addition to this, the Bible gives us many other instances of things that are pleasing to God. Write down what each of these scriptures identifies as something that is pleasing to God.

1. Hebrews 11:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Hebrews 13:15-16 \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_.
3. 1 Chronicles 29:14-18 \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Psalm 69:30-31 \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_.

These are just a few of the many ways God has expressed to us through the Bible how we can please him.

At the end of his life, Jesus was able to make the proclamation that God has never left him alone because he always did what pleases Him. (John 8:27-30)

Question: What areas of your life are pleasing to God? What areas of your life are not pleasing to God? What needs to happen in order to make those areas pleasing to him? Use the space provided to reflect on these questions.

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Answers:

1. Faith pleases God.
2. Doing good and sharing with others pleases God.
3. He is pleased to discover integrity within us.
4. Praising God's name in song and glorifying Him in thanksgiving pleases Him.

**Over the past week we have begun to paint our portrait of Jesus. We have seen that he is the Son of God and consequently God. The fulfillment of prophecy, which reaffirms to us that God has our lives under control. He is powerful and worthy to be the King that he is, worthy of our praise admiration and worship. We have learned that he has become the Baptizer of the Holy Spirit, the special gift from God to help us to live our lives in submissiveness and in a manner that pleases God as Jesus also did.**

**We hope as you continue that this portrait will begin to take on greater clarity as you learn more about Jesus.**

**DAY 8: JESUS: FAMILIAR WITH EARTHLY TEMPTATIONS**  
**MARK 1:13**

... and he was in the desert forty days, **being tempted by Satan**. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

As Jesus was being tempted out in the wilderness, he undoubtedly struggled with issues of hunger and thirst, (the physical / material difficulties we struggle with), loneliness, fear, evil spiritual forces, discovering / understanding God's purpose or direction for his life.

Do any of these temptations or struggles sound familiar to you?

Sometimes we get upset when individuals try to give us advice about an issue we are struggling with that they have never experienced.

Hebrews 2:10-18 & 4:15 explain that Jesus through his earthly life was tempted in every way we are but didn't sin through any of it. It also points out that it was necessary for him to endure this temptation so that he could very closely understand what we go through since he has also struggled through it.

Turn again to Hebrews 4:15 and read verse 16 also.

Because Jesus has struggled like we have, we can confidently approach him when we are in the midst of temptation and find mercy and grace to help us in our time of need. Though it is true that Jesus is God, it is also important and comforting to remember he was also a human being just like us, with similar needs, desires, hurts and pains.

He is the one who is familiar with earthly temptations.  
List some things you are tempted with and write a prayer to God to help you with them.

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**DAY 9: JESUS, "AT HOME" IN THE MIDST OF THE SUPERNATURAL  
MARK 1:13**

... and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, **and angels attended him.**

While it is true Jesus was familiar with earthly temptations, he was also very familiar with the supernatural power of God and experienced it regularly while he lived on earth. His entire life was surrounded by the supernatural, from his miraculous virgin birth to his seemingly impossible resurrection from the dead.

In future studies we will see that he was master over the natural events of life such as the weather or the growth of a tree, and the physical, such as the human body stricken with deformity or disease. He was also master over the evil supernatural realm, proving his authority over evil spirits time and time again. He could discern the hearts and thoughts of a man or woman instantly, sometimes before even meeting them. He knew the past events and predicted the future with 100% accuracy. He physically altered matter, (changing water into wine) and created matter, (the multiplying of the fish and the loaves of bread), all of which are naturally impossible.

Jesus reacquainted the people with an all powerful God of miracles. The same God their ancestors had experienced in their Old Testament relationship with him.

The early church understood that God was not finished performing miracles on behalf of His people who love him. They regularly experience his supernatural power at work in their lives. They were delivered from their enemies and prisons. They were rescued from violent storms at sea. They personally experienced and witnessed countless occurrences of physical healing from diseases and injuries.

Are you in need of a miraculous occurrence in your life today? Are you living your life in a state of submissiveness to God? Ask Jesus for the miracle you need today. He is still a miracle working God!

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## **MARK 1:14-20**

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.

When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

**DAY 10: JESUS PROCLAIMER OF THE GOOD NEWS**  
**MARK 1:14-15**

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, **proclaiming the good news of God**. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

For the past 200 - 400 years prior to Jesus earthly arrival, men had not heard from God at all. He had been strangely silent, fulfilling the words he spoke through the prophet Amos:

"The days are coming, declares the sovereign LORD, when I will send famine through the land. Not a famine of food or thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.: Amos 8:11-12

Into this great emptiness, Jesus came with good news!

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

The message of this good news is explained further by Isaiah 61:1-2...

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

To a captive, lost and lonely people, this was good news indeed! God was no longer to be a far away God, the time of his favor was at hand and once again they would be a people of God, dear and loved by him, provided for and protected by him.

Today, Jesus is still the proclaimer of good news. He still proclaims the year of the Lord's favor, releases those oppressed by enslaving lifestyles, and those that have been blinded by false pretenses of this world. He still is saying, "Repent and believe the good news!"

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**DAY 11 JESUS, CALLER OF MEN: GOD WANTS TO BE CLOSE TO US.  
MARK 1:16-20**

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. **“Come, follow me,” Jesus said,** “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Mark 1:16 opens... "Jesus walked beside the sea of Galilee..." which again was a direct fulfillment of the words spoken by Isaiah.

"In the past (God) humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the gentiles, by the way of the sea along the Jordan."  
Isaiah 9:1

God, it seems, was not content to be separated from the creation he made and loves so dearly. He personally came to earth in the form of Jesus to walk and live in the presence of mankind. He called these men to follow him, men who would become his dearest and most trusted friends. They would stand by him through homelessness, hunger, thirst, hard times, rejoicing, opposition, and persecution. Though they scattered when he was put to death, (again a fulfillment of prophecy), they did not run too far.

Just like you and I, Jesus desired close relationship with others!

As your closest friend, God has stated he would never leave you or forsake you. That he will provide all of your earthly needs, (though not necessarily your earthly wants), and to never stop loving you.

What will you offer him through friendship in return?

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**DAY 12 JESUS THE TRAVELER.**  
**MARK 1:9, 12, 14, 21, 31**

When studying the life of Christ, it is difficult to miss the fact that he was constantly traveling. He never stayed in one spot for too long. When asked to stay at a certain place he once responded...

"Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so I can preach their also. That is why I have come.." **So he traveled...** Mark 1: 38-39

He was a man filled with a sense of mission and duty who worked steadily through weariness and opposition until at last he was able to say. "It is finished."

God is constantly on the move, and doesn't take time out of your life to rest or go on vacation.

Psalm 121 promises...

"My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

We have a tendency to take a break now and then, and rest from our faithfulness, or stop along our spiritual journey to find a comfortable place to set up a nice little home while Jesus is saying to us... "Let us go somewhere else... I love you too much to leave you in this place, and on this level of your spiritual life. There's someone in the next town over that really needs to experience my love through your life.

Question: Are you living the proactive lifestyle of a missionary for Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

Where do you sense God taking you spiritually? \_\_\_\_\_

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When God leads you to new levels or places in your relationship with him, do you ...

- a) go kicking and screaming
- b) refuse to go or
- c) go willingly?

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**DAY 13 JESUS, TRANSFORMER OF LIVES.  
MARK 1:16-17**

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and **I will make you fishers of men.**"

Growing up in western society, we are taught many things about life, love, the world we live in and even God himself. Like the Pharisees of Jesus day... many of these concepts have been perverted by changing tradition, human fickleness and inappropriate desires.

It was Jesus' desire to transform the lives of those he was around. He told the fishermen, come with me and I will transform you into missionaries, so that you too can be my instruments to transform the lives of others.

God desires to transform our understanding of life, love and himself. To give us meaning and a purpose for living.

Consider this verse from 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

"So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. **Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

List one or two ways you have recognized God's transforming work in your own life. Or List one or two ways you want to see God's transforming work revealed in your life.

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2 Corinthians 3:18 "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

God is in the transforming business. He loves us too much to leave us the way we are. He does not expect us to transform ourselves, but to be obedient and submissive to him as he begins to transform our lives.

More than anything, God desires to get into our hearts, to change the way we think about life and love. He wants to give us an understanding of life and a purpose for living, and to show us who he is and what he expects of us.

Spend some time reflecting on how God has transformed your life, and thank him for it. Write down some of your thoughts about his transforming work in your life.

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### **MARK 1:21-28**

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!”

“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.” News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee

**DAY 14 JESUS THE TEACHER.  
MARK 1:21**

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, **Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.**

Most all of us have had at least one teacher in our lives that really made an impact on us. I had 2 such teachers in college. My college Spanish teacher was simply a gifted professor. Foreign languages were always a difficult subject for me but she had a way of inspiring us. I actually enjoyed the course and managed to get an "A". The next semester, under another instructor, I struggled to get a "D". I knew it was my first instructor's abilities that enabled me to excel.

The Second great teacher I had was my Probability instructor. He had an amazing ability to take a difficult subject and make it seem so easy, that anyone could do it. We would ask him to explain a problem that gave us great difficulty in the previous nights homework assignment. As he would walk us through the problem, the process to solve it became so simple in the master's hands. I couldn't wait to try some more problems at home.

This is how it was for the people who listened to Jesus' teachings. He was an awesome teacher and greatly inspired **those who listened with teachable hearts**. An understanding of life, love and God became so clear to them as they sat and listened to his words. Many were inspired to go and do great things as a result.

The psalmist has declared...

"Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth, give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name." Psalm 86:11

I hope that you will make that your prayer today as you sit at the Masters feet and listen to his teachings.

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**DAY 15 JESUS THE ONE WITH AUTHORITY.  
MARK 1:22, 27-28**

The people were amazed at his teaching, **because he taught them as one who had authority**, not as the teachers of the law...

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching – **and with authority!** He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee

Have you ever attended a meeting where it seemed like no one was in charge? There was a task that needed to be completed but no organization to get it done? Leaders and authority figures are necessary for us to accomplish our goals and tasks. Not all authority figures have been beneficial to mankind though. In the time before Jesus began his ministries, the ultimate authority to the people was the Roman hierarchy. Operating with some amount of freedom beneath the Roman rule were the Pharisees, Sadducees, Priests, and Teachers of the Law, in authority over the Jews.

But their authority was not completely beneficial to the peoples. In Matthew 23:13-15, Jesus says of them...

"Woe to you, Teachers of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the Kingdom of Heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Woe to you, Teachers of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are."

The spiritual state of the people was heart aching to him...

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Matthew 9:36

When Jesus spoke to the people, Mark 1:22, they listened to him and immediately recognized that he possessed an authority that was sorely missing in the Teachers of the Law.

We will see later that he didn't just possess the authority of leadership, but authority over every realm of existence, natural, physical, spiritual, super natural.

Truly it can be said that Jesus is the one with authority!

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the Name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philipians 2:10-11

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**DAY 16 JESUS: HOLY ONE OF GOD.  
MARK 1:23-24**

Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? **I know who you are – the Holy One of God!**"

The term Holy, in the Bible, means to be set apart for a special or specific purpose. **God had designed that Jesus be set apart for the special purpose of paying the penalty of sin that mankind owes.** He could not pay that price if he owed it himself though. By the power of God's spirit, Jesus was successful in living a sinless life. That he lived a sinless life is indisputable from the scriptures. Consider the following.

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin." Hebrews 4:14-15

Jesus proved that it is possible for a man to obey the Spirit of God and not sin, once he has been transformed and cleansed by Christ's redeeming work. Some have argued... Yes but he was God - that's how he was able to do it, we cannot. If you have relationship with Christ though, His Spirit dwells within you - the same spirit that enabled Jesus to fulfill God's holy purpose, is able to empower us to do the same.

God has also set you apart for a specific, special purpose in this life. Will you obey the Spirit of Jesus that lives within you, and fulfill that purpose?

"As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is Holy, so be Holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be Holy, because I am Holy!'" 1 Peter 1:14-15

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**DAY 17 JESUS AUTHORITY OVER EVIL SPIRITS.**  
**(The spiritual or supernatural)**  
**MARK 1:25**

“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

**It's important to note in Mark 1:25 that the evil spirit was subject to Jesus authority!** We saw that Jesus possessed powerful leadership authority. Here we see that he also has authority over the supernatural realm. It is an authority over spiritual forces that we cannot even see, yet somehow they are able to affect our lives adversely.

It is the ambiguous nature of the supernatural and spiritual realm that so amazed the people when Jesus displayed his authority over it. They seemed so helpless against this unseen power, but a hero walked into their midst.

"I lift up my eyes to the hills - where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1-2

The people were amazed by Jesus Authority and said amongst themselves...  
"What is this? A new teaching - and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."

It is difficult for us to understand just how the spiritual realm affects our lives here in the physical, but two aspects about it are important for us to remember.

Firstly, there are spiritual forces in this creation that are quite able to interfere in our lives whether we can see them or not.

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Ephesians 6:12

Secondly, that Jesus Christ has authority over these entities, and if you serve him, His powerful Spirit dwells within you. With those two things in mind, Christians are able to live worry free lives regarding supernatural forces. We do not fear what our Lord has already defeated!

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**DAY 18 JESUS THE HEALER:  
AUTHORITY OVER THE PHYSICAL / NATURAL.  
MARK 1:29-34**

As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and **Jesus healed many who had various diseases**. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Any illness is difficult to deal with, especially if you are confined to bed. Sometimes you wonder if you will ever feel "normal" again and you gain a new, if only temporary, appreciation for good health. Prolonged injuries or illness are even more disheartening. But Jesus has authority over the natural. The laws of nature and physics could not contain him. He could walk on the water as easily as on the ground. He spoke to wind and waves and they obeyed him. Even gravity could not contain him during the ascension.

His authority over the natural extended to illnesses of all kinds. There was no illness he could not render powerless... Even death was not a suitable challenge to his authority as he resurrected Lazarus who had died following a serious illness. No illness was beyond his ability to heal.

When we realize the extent of Christ's authority over the supernatural, spiritual and even the laws of nature we begin to see that he is able to control every avenue that life may lead us into. What is there to fear in life when you have surrendered the course of your life to him who holds everything in his hand.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled,” he said. “Trust in God; trust also in me.”  
John 14:1

“In this world you will have many troubles,” Jesus told us... “But take heart,” he added, for I have overcome the world.”

Sometimes God doesn't perform the miraculous event in our life that we feel he would do if he really loved us. It is important for us to realize that it isn't because he is unable to do that miracle. Therefore in His awesome wisdom, which is more wonderful than we can comprehend, we can trust that he has a better plan in store for us. A plan that will bring more glory to his name than if he were to heal, deliver or provide that thing we feel is so necessary. We can trust that He has a better plan.

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### **MARK 1:35-39**

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

**DAY 19 JESUS, MAN OF PRAYER.  
MARK 1:35**

**Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.**

When studying the life of Christ, it is also difficult to overlook that prayer was an integral part of who he was and what he did. He regularly went off by himself to spend time in prayer with God. He devoted a part of the Sermon on the Mount to prayer, taking for granted that we regularly pray. (Matthew 6:5-13) He taught his disciples how to pray. (Luke 11:1-13) He rebuked religious leaders for the way they pray. (Matthew 6:5) He went off and prayed three times before the hour of his greatest trial, and asked his disciples to also be in prayer about it. (Matthew 26:36-46) He mentioned that certain demonic forces could only be overcome through prayer and fasting. He prayed when he was tired, tempted, distressed and happy. He was confident that God always heard his prayers.

God was always his first resource to turn to regardless of the nature of the situations of his life.

The prominence that prayer played in Christ's life underscores the important role it should have in ours, and acts as a proportional gauge for how close our relationship with God is at any particular time in our lives. Regular, consistent prayer is one of the keys to living a successful, victorious, God pleasing life.

If you are just beginning to enjoy a praying relationship with God, you may find the ACTS model of prayer to be helpful. Just spend a couple of minutes every day on each section of the acrostic...

**A --- ADORATION** Acknowledge God as the first love of your life, and express to him the love you have for him. Recognize that he is the Almighty Creator of the earth, heavens and universe, yet also patiently knitted you together while you were in the womb.

**C --- CONFESSION** Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and show you any thing or ways in your life that are not pleasing to him. Ask God to forgive you for these things and agree to refuse to entertain these types of thoughts or actions in the future.

**T --- Thanksgiving** Spend a couple of minutes expressing to God how thankful you are to him for saving you, for the blessings of your life and the good things you have, for a new day to experience him.

**S --- SUPPLICATION** Think about those around you who have specific needs from God... Salvation, physical sustenance, deliverance, healing. Spend a few minutes asking God to reveal himself to them in the same personal ways he has revealed himself to you... ask God for an opportunity to share his love with someone else.

Take about 10 - 12 minutes right now to spend in his presence.

"Now this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." 1 john 5:14

**DAY 20 JESUS THE PREACHER.  
MARK 1:38-39**

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - **so I can preach there also**. That is why I have come." So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Jesus had a specific "call" or mission in his life to preach the message of God... everywhere in the vicinity, and he emphatically pursued that goal to its completion. He was not compelled to change his course of action by the pressing desires and wants of those around him either. He relentlessly pursued God's will, despite the disciples claim that everyone was looking for him.

As a preacher, he accurately proclaimed God's message, taken straight from the scriptures they had, the Law and the Prophets. He went deeper into the message of the scriptures though, revealing to the people a right understanding of it, not the perverted concept tradition had instilled in them over the years of misuse and abuse of God's word.

He preached where God wanted him to preach, not where the people wanted him to go. He preached the message God gave him, not just words the people wanted to hear.

What an example of faithfulness he has left for us to follow.

Questions: When is it difficult for you to stay on track and say "no" to other voices around you?

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What circumstances tempt you to compromise or water down experiences you have had in your relationship with Christ?

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"From that time on Jesus began to preach 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is near.'" Matthew 4:17

Take some time to reflect on your own desires to live a faithful life to your saviour.

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**DAY 21 JESUS THE DELIVER.**  
**MARK 1:34, 39**

... and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was... So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues **and driving out demons.**

One Sabbath day, as was the regular habit for Jesus he went to the synagogue. While he was there he was given an opportunity to read from the Holy Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah was given to him and he found a certain place in it and read the words of a prophecy. Then he clearly stated that "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:16-21

The passage he read in Isaiah gives us a detailed outline of his mission of deliverance on earth.

Read through this passage and thoughtfully answer the questions.  
Isaiah 61:1-3

Verse 1: "The spirit of the sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."

1. In your own words, what was the good news he was preaching? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Who are "the poor" referring to? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

"He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners,"

3. What to you is the difference between captives and prisoners? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Does the promise differentiate between the two? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

"...to proclaim the year of the lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our god,"

5. Has the year of the Lord's favor occurred yet? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Is it over now? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Has the day of God's vengeance occurred yet?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. When did it, or when will it? (depending on your answer to question 7.)

\_\_\_\_\_

"to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in zion - to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair."

9. Are the promises of God's comfort and providence limited in their availability?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Does God care about the struggles you face in life emotionally?

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Are these promises still available to us now? \_\_\_\_\_

"They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor."

Notice how this last verse speaks about a continuous care. A planting needs to be tended and looked after, pruned and fertilized for it to produce the desired quality of fruit which in this case is to display God's splendor.

Jesus carried out his ministry of deliverance everywhere he went. Healing and driving out oppressive demons.

He was then and remains today the deliverer!

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### **MARK 1:40-45**

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

**DAY 22 JESUS THE COMPASSIONATE.**  
**MARK 1:41**

**Filled with compassion**, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

I spoke to a young man one day, who had a popular philosophy about God. He believed that after man went astray, in the Garden of Eden, God declared... "You made your bed, now lie in it." God then has become a passive observer, patiently watching the world twirl away towards its own deserved destruction.

A careful study of the scriptures, however, reminds us constantly that God is a God of compassion, intimately involved in the lives of those who are called by his name. Consider these words from the 81st Psalm:

He says, "I removed the burden from their shoulders; their hands were set free from the basket. In your distress you called and I rescued you, I answered you out of a thundercloud; I tested you at the waters of Meribah."

God's compassion over our lives is unmistakable. Nowhere was his compassion more beautifully displayed than through his Son, Jesus Christ - His exact representation on Earth. Think about what aspect of our lives, God's care for us, is revealed, through Jesus, in each of the following passages.

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Matthew 9:36

Jesus cares about our \_\_\_\_\_

"When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick." Matthew 14:14

Jesus cares about our \_\_\_\_\_

"Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.'" Matthew 15:32

Jesus cares about our \_\_\_\_\_

"Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him." Matthew 20:34

Jesus cares about our \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus' presence on Earth was the ultimate act of compassion from a God unable

to bear the sin produced separation between His creation and Himself. Sometimes it seems like God is a far off God who is unconcerned with our pitiful lives, but remember Jesus the compassionate!

God cares about your life... He says... you made your bed... now let me remake it into something beautiful so you can lie down in peace with hope.

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**DAY 23 JESUS, WILLING TO TOUCH THE LIVES OF MEN.  
MARK 1:41**

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. **“I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!”**

Jesus reaches out and touches a leper. Leprosy in Jesus day was not necessarily what we call leprosy today, in every case, but it was often a fatal disease that slowly destroyed the body, and quickly destroyed the spirit and emotional state of those afflicted with it. By Jewish law, the lepers were cast out of society, not allowed to even draw near to others. No one would dare to touch a leper but Jesus is moved with compassion. He can't help it.

The manner in which this man makes his request to Jesus, reveals the emotional pain of rejection he must have felt. If you are willing, he says, I know you can make me clean. He believes Jesus has the power to heal him and knows with a single word it can be accomplished. He doesn't doubt Christ's authority over the affliction, he wonders if Christ will have compassion enough to love the unlovely.

How often have we felt the same way, wondering if God is willing to forgive us just one more time for something we may have done, thought, said or even believed. Sometimes we feel as though our hearts are too far away from a God who gave us one too many chances already.

Jesus didn't have to touch the man to heal his physical being, but he did need to touch him in order to heal his broken spirit and emotions.

Those with obvious physical ailments especially ailments that disfigure the appearance, are considered to be so unlovely to us that we tend to shun them at least emotionally if not physically. But Jesus looked beyond the superficial shell of the body and gazed on the affliction of the heart and soul. It is the wounded spirit that moves him so with compassion. The broken hearted that cause him to weep, stretch out his hand and say... I am willing... be made clean.

Jesus is willing to reach into the lives of sinful men and retrieve a treasure of his own working.

"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10

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**DAY 24 JESUS THE WARNER!**  
**MARK 1:43-44**

**Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning:** “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

Have you ever seen a lighthouse? Most of them are quite a sight to behold, each with its own unique breathtaking attributes. Tall and ominously jutting up out of often perilous surroundings. Beautiful and serene, quietly, but surely warding off unwary travelers from dangerous circumstances they can not perceive. Unceasing in their tireless sentinel's duties. Always beaming out their shining beacon, in fair weather or fowl, clear skies or cloudy, the worse the conditions, the louder the call... "Watch out," it cries to the nighttime seafarer, "you are headed for certain destruction!"

Jesus told us that as Christians we were to be like a light placed on a stand. A beacon crying out to lost and weary souls wandering aimlessly towards unknown destructive circumstances... "Watch out! There are perilous conditions ahead! You are bound for destruction if you maintain your present course.

He meant for us to be spiritual lighthouses warning the world, by our lifestyles, that sin only leads to spiritual destruction and death.

Jesus was also a Warner. He warned the spiritually self righteous that their empty legalism would end up leading to the destruction of their souls. "Repent," he cried out to all who would hear him, "for the Kingdom of God is near." To the healed sinner he would warn... Repent now, and leave your life of sin or something worse might befall you.

Do you think of yourself as a Warner? Take some time to think about and answer the following questions.

What ways does your lifestyle serve as a warning to others in your workplace or School? In your home? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How do you react when a policeman or traffic signal warns you of dangerous driving conditions ahead?

\_\_\_\_\_

How do you usually react when someone warns you that your conduct is inappropriate? (Pride? Embarrassment? Anger?)

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**DAY 25 JESUS: MAN OF INTEGRITY.  
MARK 1:44**

But go, show yourself to the **priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing**, as a testimony to them.”

Jesus' death on the cross was about to establish forever, the New Covenant with God through his blood. Until that time however, the Old Covenant was still in effect. Though the Law had been perverted through the years, Jesus couldn't help but obey it faithfully and with the integrity of its true meaning.

"Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;" he said, "I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Matthew 5:17

In the story told by Mark 1:40-45, Jesus performs a beautiful miracle of healing for a man inflicted with leprosy. In order to avoid being swamped by the crowds in the future, he warns the man not to tell anyone except

"...the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

When someone recovered or was healed from an infectious skin disease, he was to show himself to the priest, who would then order certain procedures and sacrifices that took a total of eight days to complete, before the individual was allowed back into the community. (Leviticus 13 & 14) It was time consuming and costly but necessary to fulfill the Law. However Jesus added -- not only will you be fulfilling the Law, acting with integrity, your integrity will also serve as a testimony to the priests.

What testimony was he referring to? What could he show the priests that they didn't already know about the procedures?

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It was a testimony about Jesus, That he did not come to abolish the Laws and the Prophet, rather he came so they might be fulfilled.

As Christians under God's New Covenant, we are still under a charge to live our lives with integrity. Everyone watches the Christian and his lifestyle, and they are quick to note when some renown Christian has been lacking in integrity -- marital fidelity, righteousness, obeying the laws of our country.

They also take note of a Christian's integrity. It testifies to them of the Holy nature of our Almighty God. Standing for what is right in God's sight is not a popular message in a world that redefines the standards of appropriate conduct and living on a

weekly basis. But God is pleased by a heart of integrity.

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**DAY 26 JESUS: DWELLER OF LONELY PLACES.  
MARK 1:45**

.” Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. **As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places.** Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

Have you ever been in a room crowded with people, but never felt so lonely? It's almost paradoxical yet such a common experience in the hustle of our busy society where people would rather conduct relations impersonally, over the internet than face to face.

In larger metropolitan cities the walkway can be so crowded, you literally have to press your way through the crowds. Your goals become hampered by the rush hour traffic which seems impenetrable. Every one is so focused on their own goals it becomes a nuisance to try and deal with someone else's problem, such as an overheated vehicle in the express lane. Patience grows thin, tempers rise and little thought can be given to those with genuine needs around us.

After Jesus healed the leper, news about him spread so quickly, he was literally swamped by the crowds of people pressing in around him. His mission of preaching the good news was severely hampered as the people required all of his physical energies. Consequently, he became a "dweller of lonely places", forced to separate himself from his "mission field" in order to more effectively accomplish his mission. Getting away from the busyness of life that threatened to engulf him was the only way he could re-energize his spirit through intimate fellowship with God in those lonely places.

Jesus understood from experience what deep loneliness was all about. In his loneliness though, he exemplified the idea we know of as "the secret place", a time to spend intimate one on one fellowship with our creator, beseeching him for the needs of those around us and asking to be an integral part of meeting those needs.

In times of loneliness in your life, remember that God understands what loneliness is, and spent many lonely nights and days in deserted, wilderness places. Perhaps he has ordained those lonely times for you as an opportunity to grow in love and intimacy with him. To regenerate and refresh your spirit, with his sweet presence.

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### **MARK 2:1-12**

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

**DAY 27 JESUS: HE WHO KNOWS THE THOUGHTS OF THE HEART.  
MARK 2:8**

**Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts**, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?"

Human beings are a thinking people, if you stop and "think" about it. Every experience, encounter, odor, sight, sound and conversation provokes a chain of thoughts.

Generally they follow a logical course, we think things like...

"It might rain today, I should wear my raincoat."

"Why does she wear those ugly dresses?"

"I wonder what's for dinner?"

"I wish I knew if she liked me or not."

"How would I look with long hair, short hair, red hair?"

"I can't stand his dumb jokes?"

Usually, we keep our negative and abstract thoughts to ourselves and only reveal the positive ones or the ones we feel will most readily be accepted and approved. Our parents have taught us, "If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all."

We tend to believe our unspoken thoughts are our own private journals, known to us alone. We would be afraid to tell, even those who are closest to us, some of our "secret" thoughts, in fear they would reject us or think differently about us.

The teachers of the Law got quite a surprise when Jesus was in their midst. They had all been silently thinking, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Immediately, the scriptures say, Jesus knew in his spirit that this is what they were thinking in their hearts and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?" Jesus asked them to give an account of their thoughts, undoubtedly to their amazement.

The Psalms declare, "Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely LORD. Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" -- Psalm 139:6-7

An old song proclaims of God, "You know me better than I know myself... [and] no one loves me like you."

Every secret thought of our hearts, God has heard and yet he still loves us, still is willing to accept us, use us for His Namesake and bless us, when we surrender to him.

Christ's life on earth has revealed to us that God is he who knows the thoughts of the heart.

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**DAY 28 JESUS: FORGIVER OF SINS.**  
**MARK 2:5-11**

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? **But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...** "He said to the paralytic, **"I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."**

To the Teachers of the Law, it was blasphemous to consider Jesus to have earthly authority to forgive sins. They could not accept him as the Son of God, and knew that only God had authority to forgive sins. Because of his Deity, Jesus did have the "right" and the power to forgive sins, and in so doing actually declared that he is God.

Uniquely, Christ pardoned all who asked of him, regardless of the nature of their sins. This is perhaps most dramatically displayed with his forgiving the thief who hung on a cross beside him. Consider that scene: read Luke 23:32-43.

Here are 3 men under the death sentence. Unlike today, there was no hope for them of a last moments reprisal or a Governors pardon. They were slowly and irreversibly following a painful path towards death and they all knew it. After acknowledging Christ, the thief asks him to remember him... It is a cry for forgiveness.

Jesus could have righteously looked at the man and justly stated... "What? Now you want me to forgive you? Now when you are at your life's end? What use do I have for you now? You won't be able to witness my gospel to even one individual. You can't offer comfort to one soul in despair, one broken fellow in prison, one dying child in a hospital. You can't even offer a single cup of water to a thirsty man. What use do I have for you in my Kingdom, now that you have wasted your life in rebellion towards God."

Characteristically of our Savior, even while in the painful agony of death, he looks beyond his personal sufferings and ministers to one last repentant sinner who has nothing left to offer but a moment of gratitude, and utters those beautiful well known words... "Today, you will be with me in paradise."

Happily, we are not in the same position as the thief was. Today you may have the opportunity to tell at least one hurt or struggling individual that Jesus has the power, the authority, and the desire to forgive their sins, whatever they may be.

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" -- John 1:12

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**DAY 29 JESUS: LORD OF THE SABBATH.  
MARK 2:23-28**

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

**Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."**

The Sabbath day was the legal day of rest. It was against the religious Law to do work on the Sabbath. Can you think of a situation or perhaps another biblical example where there was an exception to this law? \_\_\_\_\_

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In your own words , describe what you think Christ meant when he proclaimed himself Lord even of the Sabbath. \_\_\_\_\_

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Sometimes, religion can act as more of a hindrance than a helpful tool for expressing our love to God. Some Christian denominations tend to place more emphasis on obeying rules than on the freedom the Gospel has brought to our lives. The early Christian Church was plagued by groups who tried to enforce stringent rules on believers, in order to validate their Salvation. But Jesus states he is the Lord of the Sabbath.

Religion is meant to serve mankind in his pursuit of God. It was never intended to be his master.

It gives us helpful guidelines to follow in order to gain a deeper relationship with God. It was not designated to bring about feelings of guilt or apprehension.

There is nothing wrong with living religiously, but we overstep our bounds when we try to project a standard for righteousness onto others.

Jesus' statement that he was the Lord of the Sabbath intimated the advent of guilt free relational experiences with God through him. No longer would men need to be cruelly imprisoned by the harsh decrees that religious leaders imposed.

Jeremiah said, "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "When I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be

my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother saying, 'know the LORD,' because they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest..." -- Jeremiah 31:31-34

It was an amazing statement when Jesus declared "so the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath." He alone is to be our master, not religion.

When we follow him, our lives will follow a standard of righteousness that is unable to be effected by obeying rules alone.

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## **DAY 30 DISTRESSED BY STUBBORN HEARTS**

### **MARK 3:1-6**

Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

**He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts,** said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

If you've ever been around young children for any length of time, you have probably experienced the frustration of someone else's stubbornness. Sometimes we have to "learn the hard way" before we will really understand the nature of some aspects of life.

As a young child I had been warned that electricity was dangerous, but the lesson really hit home when I stuck a paper clip into a socket. With a frightening pop and a burst of sparks, a small fire started in the dust on the floor. After the initial "shock" I put the fire out and was cured regarding my stubbornness to believe in the dangerous aspects of electricity.

It is frustrating to watch someone else head off into trouble but refuse to listen to your warnings.

That is how Jesus felt while dealing with the religious leaders of his day. They were too caught up in stubbornly following their own traditions to recognize that the God they claimed to worship was standing in their very midst. All around them miracles were happening. The miraculous power of God was beautifully and mercifully poured out all about them but they could only see that their traditions were being broken.

Mark 3:5 says Jesus was deeply distressed by the stubborn hearts of those around him.

God is no different today. He is pleased when his followers learn spiritual lessons based on faith. Lovingly he disciplines us for our own good, but is anguished when we refuse to believe him and try to figure out life by ourselves, to our own peril.

Later in his life, Jesus would weep over Jerusalem because of their stubborn unbelief. The lessons of salvation must be accepted by faith. Unfortunately it is a lesson learned too late if we choose to learn that one the hard way.

Is there a lesson you are learning the hard way instead of trusting what God has said about the issue? If so, surrender your stubbornness.

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## **DAY 31 REJECTED BY MEN AND FAMILY**

### **MARK 3:20-22**

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. **When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”**

We all experience rejection many times throughout our lives, by a multitude of people and for an innumerable variety of reasons. Sometimes it is in personal ways such as in a dating relationship break up or some certain individual who just doesn't seem to like you. Other times it can be from inanimate objects such as when a vending machine cheats us or when we hit every red light on the way home.

No matter what forms we may experience rejection, it is always accompanied with feelings of frustration, anger or sadness to some degree.

Sometimes our greatest ideas are rejected and we feel like a failure. Some men have persevered through rejection of those great ideas and accomplished what seemed to be the impossible.

No one enjoys rejection. Acceptance is a basic human need for us all. Most of us live securely knowing that at least our family will always accept us, but some live without even that as a comfort.

Like us, Jesus also experienced it.

The bible says... [Jesus] was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. --John 1:10-11

Even his own mother, brothers and sisters thought he was mad and came to take charge of him. He didn't let it deter him though. Jesus persevered through the frustration of rejection because his focus was on his Father who he knew would always accept him because he followed God's will.

Jesus taught his disciples not to worry about the persecution they would face or the rejection they would endure, because he would always accept them and stand with them through whatever this life might bring.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. –Hebrews 4:15-16

Think about a time when you experienced rejection. How does it help you to know that Jesus also faced rejection in his life?

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