

Mark

Fixing Our Eyes on
the Heart of Jesus



Moline, IL
www.d4yp.com

Notes and Comments by John Sullivan

This journal belongs to:

The Heart of Jesus

And How to Imitate
His Heart

Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus from the Gospel of Mark

Notes and Comments by John Sullivan

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Mark

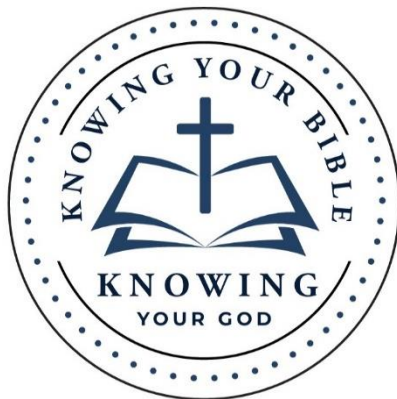
Fixing Our Eyes on the Heart of Jesus

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Appendix 2

Resources

	Topic	Website*	Page in this journal
1.	Song: <i>Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus</i>	Go to www.youtube.com and search for "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus//Sounds Like Reign."	i.
2.	Overview of Mark	Go to the bibleproject.com website. Click on the search icon (upper right) and search for "Mark."	1.
3.	Sea of Galilee	Go to www.seetheholyland.net and search for the "Sea of Galilee."	3.
4.	Tax Collectors	Go to www.gotquestions.org and search for "Why does the Bible speak so negatively about tax collectors?"	4.
5.	Song: <i>Master, the Tempest is Raging</i>	Go to www.youtube.com and search for "Master the Tempest is Raging by Crescendo."	8.
6.	Song: <i>Worthy is the Lamb</i>	Go to www.youtube.com and search for "Worthy is the Lamb//Sounds Like Reign."	25.
7.	Abba, Father	To get two different perspectives on this topic, search for "Abba" in: (1) GotQuestions.org (2) Himpublications.com	26.
8.	Song: <i>I'll Be a Friend to Jesus</i>	Go to www.bing.com and search for "I'll Be a Friend to Jesus by Inspired Melodies."	27.
9.	Medical description of the cross	Go to www.youtube.com and search for "The Crucifixion/A Medical Perspective by a trauma surgeon."	28.
10.	Song: <i>Ten Thousand Angels</i>	Go to www.youtube.com and search for "Ten Thousand Angels by State House Choir from Uganda."	28.
11.	Song: <i>Forever</i>	Go to www.youtube.com and search for "Forever (Kane Jobi Worship Song) by Chicago Church of Christ."	31.
12.	Mark's ending	Go to www.gotquestions.org and search for "Should Mark 16:9-20 Be in the Bible?"	38.

*These are sample resources for each topic. Almost all of the topics listed here have other websites that you might want to research as well.

The Questionable Ending of Mark

Students of the Bible have been aware of the questions about the authenticity of Mark 16:9 – 20 for centuries. Here is a very brief discussion about it.

1. Manuscripts

The New Testament is translated from Greek manuscripts, which are hand-written copies of the originals. The older manuscripts are generally considered more reliable. The King James version, for instance, was translated in the year 1611. Since then, older manuscripts have been used to translate the New Testament. The older manuscripts do not have verses 9 – 20. Most Bible scholars think that the verses we see here were added by a later scribe to make the letter seem to be more complete.

So, this is not a question of how to translate the Scripture, but a question of which document to use as the basis of the translation.

This is not the only example of manuscript variations resulting in newer translations leaving off verses that were in older versions. For example, it occurs four other times in Mark: 7:15; 9:45; 11:25; 15:27. Another example is the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53 – 8:11). In addition, there are several examples of manuscript variations resulting in different choices for single words, such as the word *indignant* rather than *compassion* in Mark 1:41. These are often noted in footnotes in the newer translations.

If you're interested in more information about New Testament manuscripts, look at websites such as:

[New Testament Manuscripts and Why They're Important \(logos.com\)](http://logos.com)

2. Content

On the other hand, the content of these manuscript-variation sections is not questionable. For instance, everything that is found in the long ending of Mark agrees with what is found in other Scriptures. So, this is not a matter of doctrinal or ethical concern. Your salvation and your strategy for your daily life are not in danger in any way because of the questions about these manuscripts.

3. Should we be alarmed about these manuscript variations?

One conclusion that is worthy of consideration:

This shows that Christians are honest about difficulties in our Scriptures and are not trying to hide anything; yet we are convinced that God is protecting the truth through his inspired Word and will not let anything be taken from it that we need for life and godliness (Mark 13:31; 1 Peter 1:23 – 25).

For more information, do a Google search such as Resource #12 on p. 39.

The Heart of Jesus And How to Imitate His Heart

*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
the author and perfecter of our faith,
who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame,
and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Hebrews 12:2

"Fix our eyes on Jesus." There always has been and always will be a need for Christians to do that. When times are discouraging, we can forget how powerful and loving our Lord is. When times are easier, we can forget how inspiring his call to discipleship is, reminding us to focus on what is truly important in this world.

Today, it is as important as ever to fix our eyes on Jesus!

"Come follow me," are the words we hear Jesus say to his first disciples. They took Jesus up on that invitation and went on the journey of a lifetime! They followed Jesus day and night for 3 years and saw everything that was humanly possible to see about his heart. They saw his compassion, his courage, his ability to teach right to your heart, his emphasis on love, his servant spirit, his commitment to be the sacrificial lamb of God, his undeniable resurrection, and his commission to take his story into the whole world. In this study, we also will take Jesus up on that invitation and go on that journey with him to see the same things they saw. Everyday of this study you will have the opportunity to fix your eyes on Jesus.

Mark's gospel is the shortest of the four gospel records. There are some stories about Jesus that he summarizes more briefly than the other writers do. But he very quickly gets to the heart of Jesus, and each story reveals more and more about his heart. Just as the original followers did, we too have to evaluate Jesus' heart, see if he is someone we want to follow, decide whether or not we want to try to imitate the qualities of his heart in our own lives, and then devote ourselves to the same mission he gave his first disciples. *Come and see; make a decision; go and tell!*

Whether we are new to Jesus or have been following him for years, each time we read the gospels, we benefit greatly from fixing our eyes on Jesus.

God bless you as you determine to know the Bible better and to know Him better.

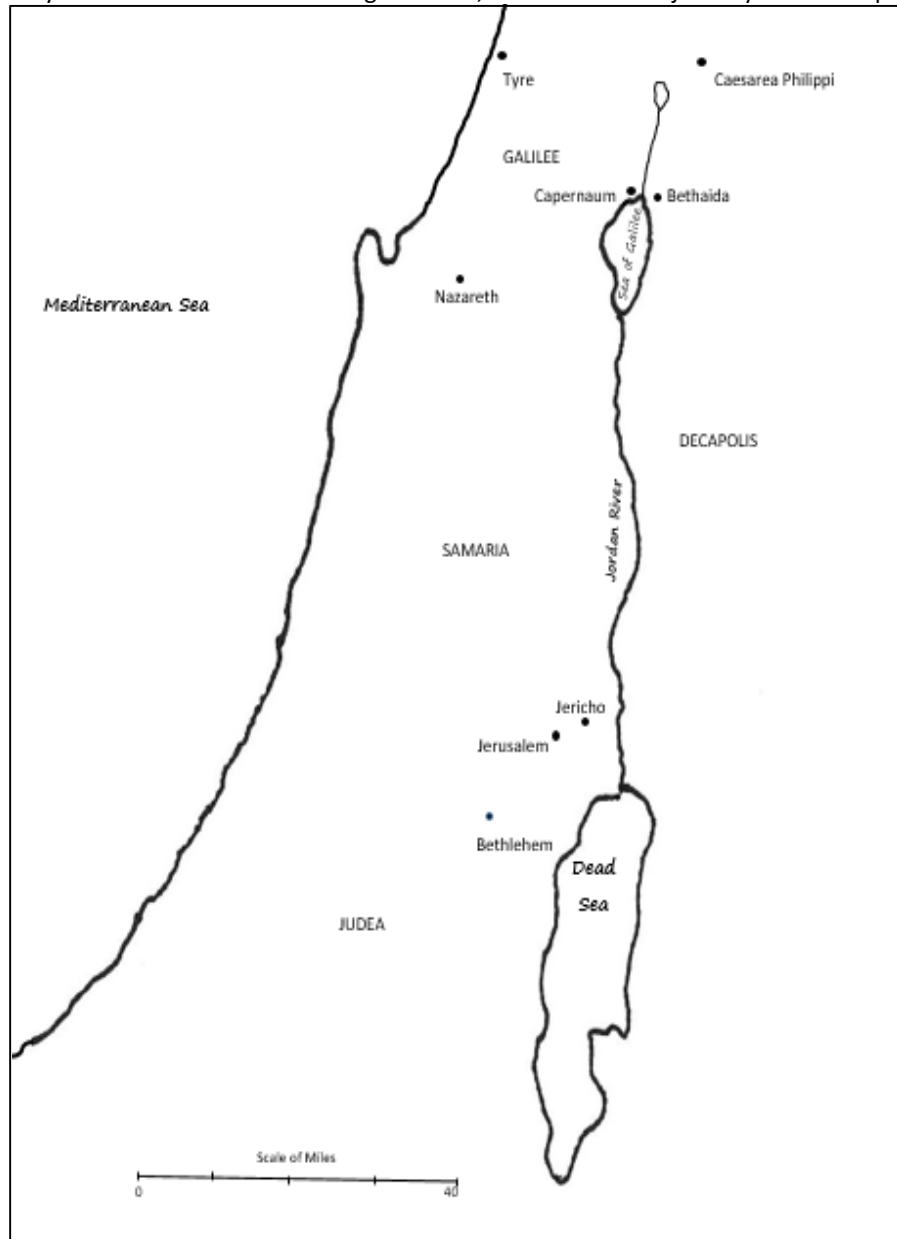
John Sullivan

August 2021

NOTE: Several times in this study you will be encouraged to use one of the resources listed on page 39 to inform or inspire you. For instance, look today at the song in Resource #1 which could easily be a theme song for this study. Also, a few times in this study you will be encouraged to take advantage of the map on page ii.

Map of Jesus' Ministry

As you follow Jesus in the readings of *Mark*, take note of the journey on this map.



Conclusion

The Heart of Jesus And How to Imitate His Heart

Thank you for taking the time to get to know the Bible better and to get to know God better.

*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
the author and perfecter of our faith,
who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame,
and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Hebrews 12:2

Throughout this study, you have been trying to do what this Scripture tells us to do: *fix your eyes on Jesus*. Through your sincere and diligent reading of Mark's gospel, you have been following Jesus. In that journey with him, you have clearly seen his heart. Whether this was the first time or the one hundredth time of looking at him, he has inspired you to realize what a privilege it is to follow him, imitate his heart, and spread his message to others.

Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.

Mark 4:9

You have also been tuning in your ears to listen more carefully to Jesus as the Master Teacher. **Fixing your eyes on him and tuning in your ears to him!** Both are much needed in our world of distractions and lowering attention spans.

As you close this study, spend a moment thanking God for the privilege of knowing the heart of his Son and pledge yourself to continue to be his faithful disciple, imitating his heart as much as is humanly possible.

*Isn't Jesus the one that I want to follow,
imitate his heart and lovingly give my whole life to?
Isn't being a disciple of Jesus and spreading his message
what I want more than anything else?*

Yes and yes!

When it comes to the heart of Jesus, truly we *have never seen anything like this!*

May God bless you as you continue to know his word and know his heart better!

John Sullivan
August 2021

Week 6
Day 6

Summary

Today's Date: _____

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's journey of fixing your eyes on Jesus, write a summary of what you know about this last chapter of *Mark* and what it teaches you about the heart of Jesus.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

Week 6
Day 7

Prepare for Worship and Fellowship

Today's Date: _____

This week you have been fixing your eyes on Jesus, turning your ears to listen to him, praising the Lord for his resurrection, and praying about how it impacts your own life. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them. What are some specific ways you can encourage someone today in these areas?

The Heart
of Jesus

Week 1

The Compassionate and Courageous Heart

Mark 1 – 3

Memory Verse for the Week:

*"Come follow me," Jesus said,
"and I will make you fishers of men."*

Mark 1:17

Week 1
Day 1

Let's Start at the Beginning.

Today's Date: _____

Read *Mark 1:1 – 11*.

1. Mark's gospel begins with the adult ministry of Jesus, rather than his birth and childhood. As you have time, look at Resource #2 on page 39 about the overview of Mark's gospel.
2. Verse 1 says "*The beginning of the gospel ...*" You have probably heard that the word "gospel" simply means "good news." Good news – something that they didn't hear much of in Roman-occupied Israel of Jesus' day and something we definitely hear very little of today. As you go through this study, consider this question: *what is the good news about Jesus and how is it needed today?*
3. John the Baptist's role was to prepare the way for Jesus.
What do you think you can do to prepare the way for Jesus in people's lives?
4. When Jesus was baptized, he heard the amazing words: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." How do those words apply to what happened to you at your baptism?

As we start our study into the heart of Jesus, meditate and pray about how the good news about Jesus has impacted your life and how you want to do what you can to prepare the way for Jesus to come into the lives of people around you.

Also, pray this week for your brothers and sisters as they also study and imitate the heart of Jesus.

Week 1
Day 2

Let's Go for a Ride!

Read *Mark 1:12 – 20*.

Today's Date: _____

1. The first thing Jesus did after his baptism was spend 40 days away from everyone else. Everyone else except the Father, of course. And, oh yes, there was Satan! Matthew and Luke give more details about the fasting and the temptations. But from what you know about that 40-day event, how would you say this experience prepared Jesus for his mission?

When is the last time you spent time in prayer and fasting?

2. Jesus' Message and Challenge

Jesus began his ministry of proclaiming the good news. Remember that John, who is now in prison, had prepared the way for Jesus' message.

- **Jesus' Message:** *"The kingdom of God is near."*
- **His Challenge:** *"Repent and believe the good news."*

There is no doubt that Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God was definitely good news to the people of that day, and it still is to people of this day. There is also no doubt that believing that good news requires a change of mind and heart, leading to a change of life (i.e. repentance).

As you start this study of the heart of Jesus and how to apply his heart to your life, how do you think his message and challenge apply to you?

3. Our Decision; Jesus' Gift

Jesus called his first four disciples: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. We see in them what we will often see as we think about imitating the heart of Jesus: it involves a decision on our part and a great gift on his part.

- **The Decision:** *"Come, follow me."*
- **The Gift:** *"I will make you fishers of men."*

One part of the definition of a *disciple* is a *follower*. Think of Jesus saying, *"Let's go for a ride. Come and see what I am like and where I am going to take you and how I will give you the ability to help others with the good news."* We can't possibly imitate his heart on our own power, but we have to decide to follow him. We decide to follow him, and he will help us grow to be like him.

In this study, prepare to put yourself in their shoes. Let's go for this ride with Jesus, see what his heart is really like and where he wants to take us.

Do you believe that Jesus wants you to be on this journey with him? Meditate and pray about how much time and energy you will spend in following Jesus.

Week 6
Day 5

Reviewing Our Journey with Jesus (2)

What a teacher!

Today's Date: _____

Throughout this study, we have seen Jesus as the Master Teacher. As you have tuned your ears to his teaching by reading through these Scriptures, think about what you have learned from the Teacher.

1. What are some of the outstanding principles that you have learned from the Master Teacher?

2. Is he the Teacher that you want to learn from the rest of your life?

3. What can you do to be a great student and practitioner of his teachings?

4. Go back over the memory verses for the last three weeks and think about what they mean to you.

Pray with awe and amazement about the Master Teacher. Meditate about how you want to be his student. (You also might want to look again at Resource #2 on p. 39 and see how that overview makes even more sense to you now.)

Week 6
Day 4

Reviewing Our Journey with Jesus (I)

Today's Date: _____

What a heart!

We began this study with accepting Jesus' invitation to come follow him. Think about what you have seen in the heart of Jesus, as you have been fixing your eyes on him and following him by reading through these Scriptures.

1. What are some of the outstanding characteristics that you have seen about the heart of Jesus?

Does this give you that *we've-never-seen-anything-like-this* attitude?

2. Is he the Lord you want to follow the rest of your life?
3. What can you do to imitate his heart?
4. Go back over the memory verses for the first three weeks and think about what they mean to you. (We'll review the last three memory verses tomorrow.)

Pray with awe and amazement about the heart of Jesus. Meditate about how you want to imitate his heart.

Week 1
Day 3

Jesus' Grace and Compassion
(Receive and Give)

Today's Date: _____

Read *Mark 1:21 – 45*.

1. Locate the Sea of Galilee and Capernaum on the map on page ii. As you have time, look at Resource #3 on p. 39.
2. What is the first thing that Jesus did in Capernaum?
3. What seems to be Jesus' heart for Peter's mother-in-law and for all the sick people that were brought to him at Peter's house?

Remember: all of this was just one day!

4. What seems to be Jesus' heart about prayer (verse 35)?
5. What seems to be his heart about spreading his message (verses 38-39)?

Note: Jesus did not allow others to rush him or dictate his agenda.

6. The healing of the man with leprosy shows a lot about Jesus' heart.
 - "Filled with compassion" (verse 41)
Some versions read "Jesus was indignant." Compassion and anger are, of course, very different, but both are intense emotions. This healing shows the intense emotions that Jesus was feeling at that time: compassion for the man and anger at what life had done to this man. Do you believe that Jesus has deep feelings about you?
 - "I am willing." (verse 41)
Jesus knew what this healing would cost him; he knew that too much emphasis on his physical healings could take away from his desired focus on spiritual health. You see that result actually happening in verse 45. But his intense feelings for the man made him willing to pay that price. Do you believe that Jesus is willing to help you?
 - "Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man." (verse 41)
Jesus touched the man before he healed him. You probably have heard that people with leprosy were considered "untouchables" in those days. They were "unclean;" no one would touch them. Can you imagine what it meant to that man to have a respectable person touch him and not react with disgust? Do you believe that Jesus "touched" you even before you were clean? That's what the heart of grace does for us!

It's no wonder that people came to Jesus from everywhere. If you witnessed what they witnessed, would you want to be with Jesus?

Receive and Give: Meditate and pray about how you will receive the compassion and grace of Jesus and how you will apply those attributes as you give to others.

**Week 1
Day 4**

*The Courage of Jesus: "We have
never seen anything like this!"*

Today's Date: _____

Read *Mark 2:1 – 3:6*.

1. The healing of the paralyzed man is another example of Jesus' heart.
 - You clearly see here the compassion Jesus had for the man's physical and his spiritual well-being. He wanted to heal him and to forgive him!
 - You also clearly see his courage. He knew how his critics would react to forgiving that man's sins, but he did it anyway. He could have done that in secret, but he did it openly. Compassion and courage!

Think also about what you can learn and apply from others in this story:

- The men carrying the paralyzed man show us a great example of love!
- By the way, how do you think the owner of the house felt about having people crowd the house and having someone tear a hole in the roof? Serving people can sometimes be tiring and costly, can't it?

The people's response: "We have never seen anything like this!" Here is a question that could be a very important one for the church today: How can we get that attitude about Jesus? He hasn't changed; have we?

2. Jesus also clearly showed courage in calling the tax collector, Levi (who is also called Matthew), to be his disciple. (Look at Resource #4 about the attitude that people had towards tax collectors in those days.)

How did Jesus answer his critics about that (2:17)?

3. What do you think Jesus meant about the new and old cloth and the new and old wineskins (2:21 – 22)?
4. Jesus gave them (and us) some great insight about the Sabbath (verse 27): *it was made for people; people were not made for it*. The rest that God intended had become a list of rules that were more stressful than they were restful.

Jesus reminded them of how David ate bread that was not normally allowed for him to eat (**1 Samuel 21:1 – 6**), showing them that God cares more for people than regulations. He also had the courage to tell them that he is actually Lord of the Sabbath (verse 28). Can you imagine how his critics reacted to that? Will you let him be the Lord of your Sabbath?

5. Finally, Jesus showed courage in healing the man on the Sabbath (3:1 – 6). What was his attitude about the stubborn hearts of his critics (3:5)?

As you look at the compassion and courage of Jesus, is he someone you want to follow? Do you want to try to imitate his heart?

Meditate about your appreciation for Jesus' heart and pray about how we can have the "we-have-never-seen-anything-like-this" attitude.

**Week 6
Day 3**

The Great Commission

Read *Mark 16:15 – 20*.

Today's Date: _____

1. The Great Commission (16:15 – 18)

These verses do not say when and where this discussion took place.

This could just be a slight variation of what we usually refer to as the Great Commission which took place up in Galilee (**Matthew 28:16 – 20**.) Or it could be an entirely different occurrence of this message.

There was a period of 40 days from the time of Jesus' resurrection to the time of his ascension. Some of the time that Jesus spent with his disciples was up in Galilee and some of it was in the Jerusalem area. It is reasonable that Jesus repeated some of his important themes at different times and settings. Luke, for instance, describes a "great commission" type of discussion which took place in Jerusalem. So, Jesus could have repeated that commission more than once, both in the Jerusalem area and in Galilee.

2. We have read that these disciples had done some things that were not exactly great examples of faith. They had deserted Jesus, denied him, and exhibited a stubbornness to believe in his resurrection. Yet these are the people that Jesus said he wanted to be his witnesses to the whole world. What a great example of forgiveness, acceptance, and believing in people! Can you imagine how these disciples felt to be entrusted with this sacred commission?

Similar to yesterday's devotional, here is an important question that you might want to spend some time thinking about:

*What is the importance of Jesus' commission to you today;
do you think of it as both a privilege and a responsibility?*

3. The ascension (16:19 – 20)

As stated above, the ascension took place 40 days after the resurrection. Jesus appeared to over 500 people during that time, both in Galilee and in the Jerusalem area. He used that time to prove that he was alive, remind the disciples of what he had taught them during his 3-year ministry, and give them specific instructions about how to carry on the great commission to all nations. Can you imagine what that 40-day period was like?

As we asked about the resurrection, what do you imagine would be the feelings of the disciples as they saw him ascend into heaven?

All of this makes it clear about Jesus: *we have never seen anything like this!*

Meditate and pray about Jesus' commission and what it means to you today. Focus on this week's memory verse and the amazing results of what is said there.

Week 6
Day 2

The Resurrection Appearances

Today's Date: _____

Read Mark 16:9 – 14.

You will notice in the footnote of most Bibles that the earliest manuscripts have Mark's gospel ending after verse 8. Verses 9 – 20 could possibly have been added later. When you have time to study this topic more deeply, look at "The Questionable Ending of Mark" on page 38 of these notes.

1. The resurrection appearances

The four Gospels and other Scriptures give several examples of Jesus physically appearing to his disciples after his resurrection. These verses in Mark represent just a brief summary of those appearances.

Recall that Jesus had clearly predicted his death, burial, and resurrection several times towards the end of his ministry. At first glance, we might be critical of the disciples for not expecting the resurrection more than they did. But we can probably also imagine what emotional turmoil they had been through and realize that we probably would have been just as confused as they were.

Here's an important question that you might find helpful to spend time on:

Why are you convinced that Jesus raised from the dead?

2. Stubbornness (16:14)

Jesus did, however, rebuke them for their "stubborn refusal to believe." We've seen a few times in our walk with Jesus in the Gospel of Mark that, while he was a loving and patient teacher, he did not hesitate to challenge his listeners to make up their minds about following him. He knows the difficulties that we have when "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (14:38). Nevertheless, he calls us to not be stubborn to the point that we just refuse to believe.

We saw an extreme example of that stubbornness in the Pharisees in chapter 3, verse 5. We saw another example of that with the disciples in the boat (8:17) and at the healing of the boy (9:19). In those last two cases, their hearts were not as completely hard and stubborn yet as some Pharisees were. But we see that Jesus is concerned that we do not let our hearts become so hard that it is difficult for us to change.

Is there anything that the Scriptures are telling you that you are being a little stubborn about believing? (This is not asking you about Scriptures that you have questions about or are hard to understand. That is probably common to all of us. The question is: are there any principles that are clear to you, but you just find yourself stubborn to accept?) Address stubbornness before it becomes hardness!

Continue to fix your eyes on Jesus as you meditate and pray about what you know about his resurrection. Are you convinced that Jesus raised from the dead?

Week 1
Day 5

Disciples and Family

Today's Date: _____

Read Mark 3:7 – 35.

1. We know that a disciple is a follower; a disciple is also a student and an imitator of the master teacher. An apostle, on the other hand, is one sent out by the master with special powers and authority. Jesus had (and has) many disciples. He only chose 12 apostles. He chose them to be with him and be sent out (verse 14). What do you see as the significance of the order of those two things: being with him and being sent out?

A lot can be said about the diversity of these chosen twelve, which also shows the compassion and courage of Jesus. For instance, Simon the Zealot would have been someone who would have had major conflicts with the tax collector Matthew, had it not been for Jesus.

2. We have seen how "popular" Jesus was among the people. They came to him from everywhere (1:45), and they said that they had never seen anything like this before (2:12). We also have seen how "unpopular" he was among the religious leaders of that day. They had already begun to plot about how they might kill him (3:6). Now, let's look at some other reactions about him.

- How did the family of Jesus feel about what he was doing at that time?
- What did the teachers of the law say about him (verse 22)?

3. Jesus didn't respond to the insult about being out of his mind, but he spent time refuting the accusation about being demon possessed and using demons to drive out demons (verses 23 – 30).

Why do you think that might have been so important to him?

4. Jesus' response about family was that his family was made up of everyone who does the will of God (verses 31 – 35).

Do you think his family understood that at the time?

It's interesting to note that Jesus' family members were not impressed with his ministry at that time, and, in fact, seemed to oppose it. Later on, however, two of his brothers that we know of, James and Jude, became disciples, leaders of the church, and even wrote two books of the New Testament. Be patient with your friends and family; don't give up on them!

Continue to look at this week's memory verse as you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. As you follow him, it is clear that he has a compassionate and courageous heart. Meditate and pray about your reaction to him and how you will respond when family or friends oppose you for following him.

Week 1
Day 6

Summary

Today's Date: _____

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's journey of fixing your eyes on Jesus, write a summary of what you know about these first three chapters of *Mark* and what they teach you about the compassionate and courageous heart of Jesus.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

Week 1
Day 7

***Prepare for Worship
and Fellowship***

Today's Date: _____

This week you have been fixing your eyes on Jesus, praising the Lord for his compassionate and courageous heart, and praying about how to imitate that heart in your own life. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them. What are some specific ways you can encourage someone today in these areas so that we all have the *we've-never-seen-anything-like-this* attitude?

**The Heart
of Jesus**

Week 6

The Resurrected Heart

Mark 16

Memory Verse for the Week:

*"Don't be alarmed," he said.
"You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who
was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.
See the place where they laid him."*

Mark 16:6

Week 6
Day 1

The Empty Tomb!

Today's Date: _____

Read *Mark 16:1 – 8*.

1. "Who will roll the stone away?"

The women were worried about something that was already resolved. Can you imagine the range of emotions they felt, looking into the empty tomb?

2. Meet him in Galilee (verse 7).

Recall that this was part of his plan that he had told them about (14:28). Note what that looks like on your map. His death and resurrection took place in Jerusalem, which is in Judea. He told them that he would meet them after the resurrection back up in Galilee. Matthew's gospel tells us that Jesus gave the great commission in Galilee (**Matthew 28:16 – 20**.) It's interesting to see how much attention Jesus put into planning and predicting all of this.

3. Raised with him

Last week we read Scriptures describing dying with Christ and being buried with him. They also say that we are raised with him. Not only that, God says that the resurrection power is at work in us today. (See **Ephesians 1:19 – 20**.) Do you have any idea how much power it took to raise Jesus from the dead? Yet, that is the power that is at work in us. This is one aspect of the heart of Jesus that we can't really "try" to imitate. No amount of trying could make it possible. It is the gift of God. What we do have to try is to try to believe it more. Do you believe that the resurrection power is at work in you today?

Meditate and pray about the resurrection of Jesus and what it means to you. Continue to pray for your brothers and sisters all week. (See also the inspiring song in Resource #11 on p. 39.)

Week 5
Day 6

Summary

Today's Date: _____

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's journey of fixing your eyes on Jesus, write a summary of what you know about these two chapters of *Mark* and what they teach you about the heart of Jesus.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

Week 5
Day 7

Prepare for Worship and Fellowship

Today's Date: _____

This week you have been fixing your eyes on Jesus, tuning your ears to hear him, and praising the Lord for his heart that made him willing to die and be buried for your sins. You have also been praying about how to imitate that sacrificial heart in your own life. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them. What are some specific ways you can encourage someone today in these areas?

The Heart
of Jesus

Week 2

The Teacher's Heart

Mark 4 – 6

Memory Verse for the Week:

*Then Jesus said,
"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."*

Mark 4:9

Week 2
Day 1

Jesus Taught with Parables

Today's Date: _____

Read *Mark 4:1 – 34*.

1. The Parable of the Seed and the Four Soils (4:1 – 20)
As a teacher, Jesus used this story to describe four different hearts that people can have about the seed, the Word of God. As many times as you may have read this story, it always helps you focus on the kind of heart you want to have. Where do you see yourself at this moment; which soil best describes you?
2. This little light of mine (4:21 – 25)
How does Jesus' teaching about hiding the light (verse 21) apply to you?
Also, how does his teaching about the "measure" (verse 24) apply to your life?
3. Another parable about seed (4:26 – 29)
What does this principle tell you about good seed in good hearts?
4. Mustard seed growth (4:30 – 32)
How does Jesus' teaching help your faith about the growth of his kingdom?
5. Look again at verses 10 – 12 and 33 – 34. Why did Jesus teach with parables?
The stories in the parables help his followers better understand and remember his teachings, while actually hiding the meaning from those who choose to not follow. Jesus does not hide things from seekers, but he does want us to have the "good soil" type of heart that will acknowledge him as the Master Teacher.

We see Jesus' heart about teaching. Meditate and pray about your heart about learning. "*Consider carefully what you hear.*" (verse 24) If you have ears, use them! Also, pray for your brothers and sisters all week that they may continue to fix their eyes on Jesus and tune in their ears to the Master Teacher.

Week 2
Day 2

Teacher, Don't You Care?

Read *Mark 4:35 – 41*.

Today's Date: _____

*People don't care how much you know
until they know how much you care.*

1. "That day when evening came . . ." (verse 35)

That day had been spent in a boat as Jesus, the Master Teacher, taught a huge crowd who were sitting on a hillside beside the Sea of Galilee. There were also private times that day when Jesus explained things even more thoroughly to his disciples. Can you imagine what it would have been like for the disciples to spend that day with the Master Teacher?

What do you think was the disciples' attitude about Jesus as a Teacher?

What is yours?

2. That night, they got in a furious storm while in that boat crossing the lake.

What was Jesus doing?

Teaching can be tiring. You can imagine that Jesus gave his all in his teaching. He was exhausted. But he did not panic about the storm.

3. "Teacher, don't you care?" (verse 38)

You can see that they had Jesus as the Master Teacher in mind with the way they addressed him. What they were about to learn, of course, raised their level of awe and respect for him to a whole different level.

The famous quote at the top of this page is attributed to many people, including President Theodore Roosevelt. Have you experienced the truth of that statement, both as a teacher and as a student?

- Do you think Jesus was offended when they questioned his caring?
- Do you believe that the Teacher cares about the storms in your life?

4. "Who is this?" (verse 41)

Jesus calmed the storm with just the words "*Quiet! Be still!*" Understandably, that brought a sense of awe into the disciples' hearts. Can you blame them?

They were now more afraid of Jesus than they were of the storm!

When Jesus calms storms in our lives, do we respond with that level of awe?

Meditate and pray about your faith in the Master Teacher's care and power. You might want to listen to a very moving and powerful summary of this story in the song "*Master, the Tempest is Raging*." (Resource #5, page 39.)

Week 5
Day 5

They Buried My Lord.

Read *Mark 15:42 – 47*.

Today's Date: _____

You may have not spent as much time thinking about the burial of Jesus as you have his death and resurrection. If so, you might find the four questions raised in the notes below interesting and worthy of more than one day's study.

1. Let's look at Joseph of Arimathea, who loaned his tomb to Jesus. (I say "loaned," because obviously Jesus was not going to use it long.)

- He was a member of the Council, the group that decided to have Jesus killed. **Luke 23:50 – 51** says that he did not agree with their decision.
- He was a secret disciple, because of the fear of the Jews. (**John 19:38**)
- He was accompanied by Nicodemus. (**John 19:39**)
- He went boldly to Pilate and asked permission to bury Jesus (15:43).

Joseph was more courageous after witnessing the death of Jesus than he was before. Could it be that the death of Jesus changed him? (**John 12:32**)

2. The Scriptures talk about our identity with the burial of Jesus.

Romans 6:4 and **Colossians 2:12** say that Christians have been buried with Christ in baptism. The imagery that God seems to want us to have as Christians is that our old life was crucified with Christ and buried with him. Then our new life began as we were raised with him.

What are some of the applications that come to your mind when you remind yourself that your old life (with its sinful desires and habits) is buried?

3. How is the burial of Jesus important to the Gospel story?

I Corinthians 15:3 – 8 speaks of the importance of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. We can easily see how important the death and resurrection are to the Gospel story, but how about the burial? **Matthew 27:62 – 66** gives some insight into that. The Pharisees went to Pilate with the concern that someone might steal Jesus' body and claim that he was raised. Pilate gave them permission to "*make the tomb as secure as you know how*." This resulted in setting up a guard and a seal on the rock. So, the secure burial makes it even more clear that the resurrection was real, not faked.

4. Where was Jesus during the time that his body laid in the tomb?

Did he go to hell? Many Christian commentators do not think so. But if he did, that makes his sacrifice even more powerful. Not only did he physically die for us, but he also experienced what spiritual death (separation) is like.

I Peter 3:18 – 22 gives some information about what he did during that time, but even that passage is loaded with mystery. What is clear is that his burial was a real historical event with applications to our lives.

Meditate and pray about the burial of Jesus and the burial of your old life.

Week 5
Day 4

They Crucified My Lord.

Read *Mark 15:16 – 41*.

Today's Date: _____

1. Flogged, beaten, and mocked (15:15 – 20)

We read verse 15 yesterday. Read it again and let it sink in. It only takes four words to summarize what Pilate did: "*he had Jesus flogged*." But you probably know a little about flogging, and how painful and de-humanizing it was.

The crown of thorns would have also been horribly painful and loaded with cruel mockery.

They spat on him and bowed before him in a shameful effort to make him feel as humiliated as possible.

Remember that it was this type of experience that we are told that Jesus endured for "*the joy set before him*." (**Hebrews 12:2**) We also know that he had the power to stop this at any time and make them regret every move.

How can we possibly thank him enough for doing this?

2. The crucifixion itself was also a cleverly devised method to combine pain and humiliation to the one being punished. We probably cannot imagine the excruciating pain or the gut-wrenching humiliation.

Again, how can we possibly thank him enough for doing this?

3. Forsaken by God (15:33 – 34)

As horrible as the pain was, and as humiliating as the mockery was, this moment of being separated from the Father could be the most difficult part of the cross-experience for Jesus. It's possible that this was what Jesus dreaded the most when he prayed in the garden (this week's memory verse).

Darkness came for three hours in the middle of that day, possibly symbolizing the feelings the Father was going through also.

We know that this separation was due to our sin. Jesus took on our sin (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). The one who had no sin became sin for us and received the punishment that one would deserve if he had committed every conceivable sin.

Again, how can we possibly thank him enough for doing this?

4. "*Jesus breathed his last*." (15:37 – 39)

The curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom at that moment, signifying God opening the way for us to enter into his presence.

It's no wonder that the centurion reacted the way he did.

Meditate and pray about this amazing event and what it means to you. You might want to look at the *Medical Description of the Cross* and listen to the song *Ten Thousand Angeles*. (See Resources #9 and 10 on p. 39.)

Week 2
Day 3

Jesus Taught with Powerful

Examples

Read *Mark 5*.

Today's Date: _____

The disciples had already seen a mind-blowing miracle that showed them that their Teacher was someone with unimaginable power. This chapter has three more amazing miracles. As you think about them, try to imagine the tremendous relief Jesus brought to the people involved. In addition, think also about what Jesus was teaching his disciples during these miracles. He taught with examples.

1. The demon-possessed man (5:1 – 20)

You can imagine how much people feared this man and how much agony he had suffered. It's not surprising to see his gratitude for what Jesus did.

- In addition to how much this helped the man, what do you think Jesus taught this man, his disciples, and us by healing him?
- Why do you think the people in the region wanted to get rid of Jesus after witnessing the incident of the deviled ham?

2. The long-suffering woman (5:21 – 34)

It's great to see the amount of faith she exhibited. Again, you can imagine the tremendous relief Jesus gave her after her years of agony.

- Do you think Jesus really didn't know who touched him?
- What do you think this healing taught the woman, his disciples, and us?

3. Raising Jairus' daughter (4:35 – 43)

"*Why bother the teacher anymore?*" (verse 35) You can tell that these people thought of Jesus as a teacher, but they did not yet know what power he really had. As we saw in the above two miracles, it is easy to imagine the amazing joy that Jesus brought to this girl and her family with this miracle.

- "*Don't be afraid; just believe*." (verse 36) Jesus often taught about the need to overcome fear. How is that needed today?
- What do you think Jesus taught all of them and us by this miracle?

What a Teacher! Great compassion; unimaginable power; wonderful teacher!

- What do you think the disciples thought about their Teacher now?
- What do you think about Him?

Keep fixing your eyes on Jesus as you meditate and pray about your awe and respect for him as the Master Teacher, the healer, and the one who has power over Satan and death. *We have never seen anything like this!*

Week 2
Day 4

The Teacher Goes Home

Read *Mark 6:1 – 6*.

Today's Date: _____

1. "Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples." (6:1)

Mark doesn't identify here Jesus' hometown, but we know that it was Nazareth. (See **Luke 4:16**.) Look at the map on page ii to see where Nazareth is in connection to the Sea of Galilee area which has been the location of the events we have been studying so far.

Jesus' disciples were with him on this home-town visit. As you think about what happened there, also think about what the disciples learned from the experience.

2. As he had been doing, one of Jesus' priorities during this visit was teaching. The reaction of the people there was that of amazement and offense.

- "Many who heard him were amazed." (verse 2)
- "They took offense at him." (verse 3)

How do you think that was possible; how could they be both amazed and offended?

3. Also, as he had been doing, another of Jesus' priorities during his visit was healing the sick. But we are told that he could only heal a few people there because of their lack of faith (verse 5).

My first reaction to that is that "only a few" still means that he healed some. It's amazing that his standard was that high. "Only a few" healings would still amaze us; but it concerned him. Have we lowered our expectations?

4. Jesus was amazed (verse 6).

But his amazement was about their lack of faith.

Another time that the Bible says that Jesus was amazed was **Luke 7:9**, which describes the time he was amazed about someone's great faith.

It is not our goal to try to impress Jesus, but it's an obvious question: *would you rather have Jesus be amazed at your faith or your lack of faith?*

This was a very short reading today. It might be a good time to look back at what we have seen so far as we have followed Jesus.

- Are you amazed at his heart for compassion, courage, and teaching?
- Do you have the "we've-never-seen-anything-like-this" attitude?
- Are you amazed at your faith or your lack of faith?

Meditate and pray about what the disciples learned during their visit to Jesus' hometown and what you have learned so far in your journey with Jesus.

Week 5
Day 3

They Tried My Lord and Master.

Read *Mark 14:53 – 15:15*.

Today's Date: _____

Jesus' trial was completely unjust. Even Pilate knew that Jesus' accusers did not have a single true charge against him. It was all lies, motivated by hate and envy. Because of that, it is clear that the purpose of God is what is really driving his trial and death. He is the Lamb of God who is being sacrificed as our Passover Lamb.

1. The trial before the Chief Priest and the Sanhedrin (14:53 – 65)

This court had already made up its mind to kill Jesus. It's interesting that even their false witnesses couldn't agree. Throughout the false accusations, Jesus remained silent. (See **Isaiah 53:7** and **1 Peter 2:23**.) How hard do you think that would have been?

But he did answer the question about being the Christ, the Son of God (verse 61). That was all it took to get the decision they already wanted. They called it blasphemy, which means to speak irreverently about God. The Law of Moses decreed that blasphemy was worthy of death. If any other human said what Jesus said in verse 62, that person would indeed be blaspheming and deserve death. The irony is that Jesus was sentenced to death for telling the truth.

2. The rooster's crow (14:66 – 72)

While Jesus went through his shameful trial, Peter denied knowing him – three times. How can you explain how someone as strong as Peter could be so frightened by this girl's accusation?

One of the most chilling moments is described in Luke's account of this instance. For a brief moment Peter and Jesus made eye contact. (**Luke 22:61**) That's when Peter went outside and wept bitterly. One of the great testimonies is seeing how Peter recovered from this defeat.

3. The trial before Pilate (15:1 – 15)

As mentioned at the top of this page, Pilate knew that the only reason Jesus was being accused was because of envy (verse 10). Persuaded by the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas, using the annual prisoner-release program. The city that yelled "Hosanna" on Sunday, yelled "Crucify him!" on Friday. So Pilate had Jesus flogged and sent out to be crucified.

Is it clear that none of this could have happened without the bigger-picture plan of Jesus being the sacrificial Lamb of God? He could have easily stopped all of this at any moment. How can we thank him enough for doing this?

We'll read tomorrow about the crucifixion. For now, meditate and pray about what you will do as Jesus stands on trial today. (You might also be inspired by the song, which is Resource #8 on p. 39.)

Week 5
Day 2

In The Garden with Abba

Read *Mark 14:32 – 52*.

Today's Date: _____

1. The emotional stress of Jesus (14:32 – 34)

Luke, the doctor, tells us that Jesus' agony caused him to sweat like drops of blood (**Luke 22:44**). Jesus knew he was going to die for our sins, which would separate him from the Father. He knew it and accepted it. But that did not keep it from being an agonizing and overwhelmingly emotional time. How does it feel to know that he went through that much agony for you?

2. "Abba, Father . . . Not my will, but yours be done." (14:35 – 36)

Jesus' heart modeled two important concepts that he taught: (1) a loving relationship with the Father, and (2) self-denial and surrender to His will.

Abba means *father* in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke. *Pater* means *father* in Greek, the language in which the New Testament was written. Both words illustrate what Jesus taught and modeled throughout his ministry: an intimate and an obedient relationship with the Father. And Mark seems to want to emphasize that here as does Paul in **Romans 8:15** and **Galatians 4:6**. (As you have time, look at Resource #7 on p. 39.)

That was Jesus' heart. How can we imitate that heart?

3. "The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." (14:37 – 42)

The disciples wanted to be helpful; they were willing. But they were not able to stay awake and be on guard for Jesus. Can you identify?

The Lord knows how we are made. (Compare with **Psalms 103:8 – 14**.) He understood their weakness there in the Garden. He seemed to want to make sure they understood it also, so they could pray and not fall into temptation. What do you learn from Jesus' understanding of their situation?

4. The betrayal and arrest (14:43 – 52)

At least one of the disciples was willing to fight for Jesus. Others probably would have too. But Jesus stopped them from doing so and allowed the arrest to take place. Again, that shows you who was in control. If it were not his time, and if he were not willing to be taken, there is, of course, no way that any humans could have overcome the one who calmed the storm, cast out demons, and had a legion of angels at his side.

That willingness of Jesus to be arrested may have been one of the things that confused his disciples. It was at that point that they deserted him. It sometimes doesn't take very much time to go from devotion to desertion.

(By the way: many commentators think the young man who streaked away in verse 52 could have been Mark himself.)

Continue to fix your eyes on Jesus as you meditate and pray about your desire to imitate both his close and his obedient relationship with Abba.

Week 2
Day 5

Jesus Wanted Active Learners

Read *Mark 6:7 – 56*.

Today's Date: _____

We know that we learn by listening, watching, and doing. Jesus was the Master Teacher, so he not only taught with words and examples, he also taught by having his students actively do what he was teaching. He taught by activity.

1. Sending out the Twelve (6:7 – 13)

What are some of the key ingredients you see about the way the Teacher sent his disciples out at that time?

2. An important back story: the death of John the Baptist (6:14 – 29)

This event had already taken place. Mark describes it here, because one of the reactions that some people had about Jesus was that he might be John, come back to life.

Herod was an example of someone who feared people more than he feared God. What do you learn from his bad example?

3. The return of the Twelve (6:30 – 31)

The 12 apostles came back (verse 30) with a report of all that had happened. What was Jesus' next step with them?

4. Feeding the 5000 (6:32 – 44)

Again, we see a great miracle that met an important need and, at the same time, taught a powerful lesson to the disciples. What are some things that you think Jesus was teaching the disciples during this miracle?

Note especially verse 34 about Jesus' compassion for those who were like "sheep without a shepherd." What an amazing heart! How is that needed in our world today?

5. Walking on the water (6:45 – 56)

OK, now you're just messing with them!

What do you think they learned from this event?

It's clear: Jesus has a heart for teaching. He's good at it; he wants to be our Teacher; and he wants us to be active learners.

Meditate and pray about your heart for learning. Keep focusing on this week's memory verse as you continue to fix your eyes on Jesus and tune in your ears to listen to what the Master Teacher says.

Week 2
Day 6

Summary

Today's Date: _____

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's journey of fixing your eyes on Jesus, write a summary of what you know about these three chapters of *Mark* and what they teach you about the teaching heart of Jesus.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

Week 2
Day 7

Prepare for Worship and Fellowship

Today's Date: _____

This week you have been fixing your eyes on Jesus, praising him as the Master Teacher, and praying about how to be a good student-disciple with your ears tuned into what he says. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them. Think of some specific ways you can encourage someone today so that we all have the conviction: *Jesus is our Teacher; we are his students.*

The Heart
of Jesus

Week 5

The Crucified Heart

Mark 14 – 15

Memory Verse for the Week:

*"Abba, Father," he said,
"everything is possible for you. Take this cup
from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

Mark 14:36

Week 5
Day 1

The Passover Lamb

Today's Date: _____

Read *Mark 14:1 – 31.*

1. "Not during the Feast" (14:2)

This was the week for the annual Passover celebration, which began over 1400 years earlier to commemorate God's miraculous delivery from the slavery in Egypt during the time of Moses. It seems from Jesus' actions and words since he first predicted his death (8:31) that he knew that he would die during Passover as our Passover Lamb. If so, the timing was important.

Jesus' enemies wanted to have him arrested and killed. But they thought it was a bad idea to do that during the Passover Feast, because they knew the people who loved Jesus so much would not put up with that. However, that is just the time they did it. That shows you: *who is really in charge here?*

2. The Last Supper and the New Covenant (14:22 – 25)

The unleavened bread and the cup were familiar parts of the Passover meal. Jesus gave new meaning to them. How can you keep his meaning fresh in your heart and mind as you take the Lord's Supper with him?

3. Jesus' predictions (14:18, 27, 28, 30)

Remember, Jesus was a prophet. It was revealed to him what was going to happen. He had already frequently spoke about his suffering, death and resurrection. Here, he explained that he also knew that his closest friends would desert him, some would deny him, and one would betray him. He even knew where he would meet them after his resurrection (verse 28).

Meditate and pray about Jesus as the Lamb of God. (You might want to listen to the song in Resource #6 on p. 39.) Also, pray for your brothers and sisters all week that they may continue to fix their eyes on Jesus.

Week 4
Day 6

Summary

Today's Date: _____

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's journey of fixing your eyes on Jesus, write a summary of what you know about these four chapters of *Mark* and what they teach you about Jesus' heart for love.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

Week 4
Day 7

Prepare for Worship and Fellowship

Today's Date: _____

This week you have been fixing your eyes on Jesus, tuning your ears to hear him, praising him for his heart about love, and praying about how to be a good follower (disciple) of Jesus by also having a heart devoted to love. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them. What are some specific ways you can encourage someone today in these areas?

The Heart
of Jesus

Week 3

The Self-Denying Heart

Mark 7 – 9

Memory Verse for the Week:

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Mark 8:34

Week 3
Day 1

What's in Your Heart?

Today's Date: _____

Read *Mark 7*.

1. Jesus saw two things in the Pharisees that disturbed him (7:1 – 13):
 - **Hypocrisy.** He often addressed hearts that were dull, fearful, and even stubborn. But hypocrisy is something else. What does that mean to you, why is it so dangerous and what can you do about it?
 - **Putting human traditions above God's Word.** Again, what does that mean to you, why is it so dangerous and what can you do about it?

The bottom line: they had religious sounding words, but their hearts were far from God (verse 6). Jesus knows that, and he alone has the cure for it!
2. Jesus taught the crowds and the disciples about the heart. (7:14 – 23)
How does his teaching about the heart apply to you?
3. Jesus taught in other regions (7:24 – 37). Follow his journeys on the map.
Many Gentiles lived in this area. Jesus saw the faith of the Gentile woman from Syrian Phoenicia and healed her daughter. Jesus tested her faith (verse 27), and she passed with flying colors! (It's interesting that this is the same area where Elijah found a faithful woman, in **1 Kings 17**.) Jesus also healed a man who was deaf. What was the reaction of the people who saw and heard Jesus (verse 37)?

Meditate and pray about your continued amazement and awe about Jesus' heart as well as your focus on your own heart. All this week, also continue to pray for your brothers and sisters as they too get into Jesus' heart and their own hearts.

Week 3
Day 2

Do You Get it Yet?

Read *Mark 8:1 – 26*.

Today's Date: _____

1. Another Miraculous Meal: Feeding the 4000 (8:1 – 10)

This is the second time that we see Jesus miraculously feeding a multitude, and once again we see his compassionate heart, his power, and his teaching:

- His compassion (verse 2). How many of us would have said *"If you didn't prepare, that's not my fault"*?
- His power to provide what is lacking. What seemed to be an impossible situation was totally possible with Him.
- His focus on teaching the disciples. What did they learn about sharing, praying, and serving?

NOTE: in both of these miraculous feedings, they picked up basketfuls of leftovers (6:43 and 8:8). We are not told the reason for this, but it is possible that it was connected with the Jewish admirable practice of that day to collect food to feed the poor – something we see described in **Acts 6:1**.

2. Easy to forget what God has done in the past; hard to remember (8:11 – 21)

The disciples thought Jesus was talking about their failure to bring food when he discussed the "yeast" of the Pharisees (8:14 – 16).

Forgetful, stubborn, and slow to understand. This is a human condition that Jesus had to address many times with his disciples. (Not us, of course; right?) You can see that he cared for them and was willing to teach them. But his love, patience, and compassion did not keep him from scolding them at times and calling them to do better in this area. How would you feel if someone (especially Jesus) called you stubborn and slow to understand?

Do you think they ever got it?

3. The second touch (8:22 – 26)

Jesus healed many blind people. The unique aspect of this healing is that he did it in two steps. The first touch resulted in partial restoration of sight. The second touch resulted in full restoration.

(Personally, I don't think Jesus made a mistake in this healing and would say: *"Oops! I didn't get it right the first time; let me try again."* No, I think he did it deliberately to make a point. But that's just my opinion.) Sometimes, Jesus helps us see things a little better at first, and then he helps us see even more clearly later. Can you think of any situations like that in your life?

How would you answer Jesus' question in verse 21? As you continue to fix your eyes on Jesus, meditate and pray about your on-going desire to know his heart better and not be stubborn or slow to put your faith in him.

Week 4
Day 5

Jesus the Prophet

Read *Mark 13*.

Today's Date: _____

1. The disciples were impressed with the temple's massive stones (verse 1).

How do you think Jesus' prediction about the destruction of the temple (verse 2) struck them?

2. Jesus, the Master Teacher, was also the Prophet. Prophets had two roles: revealing the Word of God to the people and revealing the future. They frequently did the first and occasionally did the second. Jesus also always worked as a Prophet in the first sense of revealing the Word. After all, he is the Word. This, though, is one of the few times that he revealed the future. (Another example is his predictions about his own death and resurrection.)

As in the case of other prophets' revelations about the future, this example has brought much discussion and controversy about what it means. Jesus used imagery that was very familiar to the Jewish mind of that day but sometimes difficult for us to understand.

3. The multi-part prophecy and the focus on love

One thing that helps to understand this difficult passage is to note that Jesus is talking about more than one future event: (1) the physical destruction of the temple, which happened in 70 A.D. and (2) his second coming at the end of the age. It's a little clearer when you read the disciples' questions in **Matthew 24:3**. In addition, there is the general prediction of persecution and the appeal to always be watchful. Matthew's account of this prophecy also shows Jesus' ongoing concern about the importance of love (**Matthew 24:12**). Clearly, his loving heart prompted him to give them this warning.

4. "The abomination that causes desolation" (verse 14)

This referred to the extreme defiling of the temple, which happened twice. The first time was predicted in **Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11** and was fulfilled by the Greek Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BC, at the time of the Maccabean revolt. It happened again in 70 A.D., as predicted by Jesus, when the temple was destroyed by the Roman army of Titus. The Jewish historian Josephus tells us of the multitudes that died in Jerusalem by starvation then. To say the least, it was a devastating and humiliating time.

5. "No one knows about that day or hour . . ." (verse 32)

Here, Jesus could be referring to his second coming. He makes it clear that we do not know when that will happen. But he also makes it clear that we need to keep prepared for it. Since the time Jesus taught this, people have tended to either ignore the second coming of Jesus or be obsessed with it. We should always be aware of the fact that his second appearing could be at any time, but we don't need to be living in dreadful fear of that moment.

Meditate and pray about your attitude about the second coming of Jesus.

Week 4
Day 4

The Greatest Commandments

Today's Date: _____

Read *Mark 12*.

1. The Parable of the Vineyard (12:1 – 12)

Jesus told this parable to the religious leaders that he was talking to in the previous reading. They were familiar with both the literal topic of renting out a vineyard and the allegorical use in the Old Testament of the vineyard representing God's kingdom. What was their reaction to this parable?

2. The question with a trap (12:13 – 17)

Jesus' answer dealt wisely with their trick question and also taught a great principle today. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

How does that apply to you?

3. Another attempt to trap Jesus (12:18 – 27)

The Sadducees and Pharisees usually argued with each other. In Jesus, though, they found a common enemy. So they joined forces against him.

Once again, Jesus gave them a wise answer to their trick question and a great principle to apply to all of us in general (verse 24). Their error was not *knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God*. This very important concept is the inspiration for the *Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God* theme of all these devotionals. How does it apply to you today?

4. The greatest commandments (12:28 – 34)

This leader's question seems more genuine. It involved another topic that was familiar to Jesus' audience, that of trying to condense the Law to a short statement. Jesus emphasized love for God and love for others – our memory verses this week. Jesus called these the greatest commandments.

Do we still see them as the greatest commandments?

What does the phrase "not far from the kingdom" (verse 34) mean to you?

5. Jesus' questions and warnings (12:35 – 40)

They gave up trying to trick him with questions, so he asked them one. This reference to **Psalms 110** was again familiar to Jesus' audience, but Jesus took them deeper into it. They all expected the Messiah to be a descendent of David. What they didn't realize was that he is also Lord.

What warning did he give about the teachers of the Law?

6. Giving from the heart (12:41 – 44)

What impressed Jesus about giving and what didn't impress him?

Meditate on our memory verse for the week and pray about how you will apply the greatest commandments to your life.

Week 3
Day 3

Who Do You Say I Am?

Today's Date: _____

Read *Mark 8:27 – 9:1*.

You see here Jesus, the Master Teacher, continue his pattern of teaching the crowds publicly and the twelve privately.

1. The Mid-term Exam

Of course, every teacher likes to give exams! (And students love them too!) These student disciples were in the middle of their three-year journey with Jesus, so he gave them this exam consisting of two questions:

- "Who do people say I am?" (verse 27) That was a fairly easy factual question. But it is an important one. Even today, it is good to know what people around us think about Jesus. How would they know the answer to that question?

What about today; what do people today say about Jesus? (Again, how would we know the answer to that?)

- "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" (verse 29) This was the most important thought question that they could ever consider. Remember that they asked that question themselves the first time they saw Jesus calm a storm (4:41). At this point, they had seen a LOT, and they definitely have the "we've-never-seen-anything-like-this" attitude. List just a few things that they had seen in their journey with Jesus up to this point.

2. Did I give the right answer, teacher?

There's no "right" answer to this question in the sense that you want to give the answer that the Teacher is looking for. Remember what Jesus thought about hypocrisy. The answer has to be truthful and from the heart. How did Peter show that he still had a lot to learn?

3. Self-denial (8:34 – 9:1)

What we read in the previous verses was a private teaching to the twelve. This teaching was to everyone. It's a familiar teaching to disciples today and contains our memory verse for this week. We probably studied this Scripture when we were first coming to Christ and made our decision to follow him.

As you read it today, write and answer your own "mid-term" exam question. It might start: "Since I am somewhere in the middle of my life of following Jesus, what . . . ?"

Meditate and pray about your answers to Jesus' questions and the answers to your own questions about following him.

Week 3
Day 4

The High's and the Low's

Read Mark 9:2 – 29.

Today's Date: _____

1. On the mountain with Jesus (9:2 – 13)

Six days after they had that deep exam time with Jesus on the way to Caesarea Philippi and heard him tell the crowd the fundamental requirements for being his disciple, Jesus took three of his disciples on a mountain where he was "transfigured." Of all of the events that they witnessed with Jesus, this had to be one of the most unusual ones.

Moses and Elijah would be two people that these three disciples admired a lot. Peter was so awe-struck that he said the first thing that came to his mind. "He did not know what to say." (verse 6) But that, of course, didn't keep him from saying something! Ever been there?

What was God's singular point to these disciples in verse 7 (and to us today)?

2. Back in the valley with him (9:14 – 29)

Can you imagine the let-down of coming from that mountain top (literally) experience to this situation?

Once again, Jesus challenged their lack of faith (verse 19). The patient, loving, and caring teacher was not afraid to call them higher. (Just a thought question that is a little off the subject of the main point of this reading: do you think it is possible that our egos have become too soft, to the point that we can't take challenges like they could?)

"Bring the boy to me." (verse 19) Jesus was not afraid of difficult situations. Bring the problem to me! Don't you love that confidence that Jesus had, and don't you want to be that person today also?

"If you can? Everything is possible for the one who believes." (verse 23) The first part of that verse is a reminder to not be doubtful. Praying "if it is the Lord's will" is not an excuse to think that maybe he can't do it. The second part of the verse is an affirmation of the highest level. What does this "everything-is-possible" statement really mean to your life?

The father's statement in verse 24 is a comforting example of what we often feel. "God," we might pray, "I definitely do believe, but I have to be honest that I still need help to have greater faith." What does this "help-my-unbelief" request really mean to your life?

Meditate and pray about your continued growth in admiration and imitation of Jesus' heart and your determination to do what God said to do in verse 7.

Week 4
Day 3

The Triumphal Entry

Read Mark 11.

Today's Date: _____

This is the beginning of what we call the *Passion Week*, which began with his triumphal entry on Sunday and included his death on that Friday.

1. Hosanna! (11:1 – 11)

Riding on a horse was the symbol of the one coming to conquer; riding on a donkey was the symbol of one coming in peace.

The word "hosanna" is often used today as a word of praise, similar to "hallelujah." But the Greek word actually means "save us." What do you think the crowd meant by that on that day, and what does it mean to you today?

2. Cursing the fig tree (11:12 – 14; 20 – 26)

It is hard for us to understand why Jesus cursed this tree, since it wasn't time for it to bear fruit anyway. People have often speculated about what we can learn from the tree. But the only point Jesus made was about prayer. So, it's possible that the tree itself doesn't relate to anything else.

The two principles that Jesus taught here about prayer are repeats of important concepts that he taught at other times:

- Prayer is powerful, because the powerful God works through our faith.
- Prayer is personal, because it is affected by our attitude toward people.

3. Clearing the temple (11:15 – 19)

Jesus quoted from **Isaiah 56:7** and **Jeremiah 7:11**.

The area that Jesus cleared was called the Court of the Gentiles. It was the only part of the temple grounds that Gentiles were allowed to enter. God wanted it to be a place where **all nations** could come and pray, but the merchants had made it difficult for them to come and worship. Do you see why Jesus was so passionate about this?

He said they had made it like a den of robbers, a phrase that could describe the hiding places for dangerous criminals on the road to Jericho. To Jesus, stealing the opportunity to worship God from people of all nations is as disturbing as physically robbing them. How can we make sure we avoid that?

4. The trick question (11:27 – 33).

Authority is an important concept, and the Scriptures in *Mark* that we have been reading have often pointed to Jesus' authority. What do you think about the way Jesus answered them?

Praise Jesus about what you see in his heart in this chapter. Meditate about how it contributes to your awe of him and your desire to be like him.

Week 4
Day 2

The Loving Servant

Read *Mark 10:32 – 52*.

Today's Date: _____

1. The Teacher led them toward Jerusalem. (10:32 – 34)

It was time for the annual Passover celebration. Jesus had led his disciples to Jerusalem in previous years to celebrate Passover. This time, as Jesus led his followers toward Jerusalem, they were astonished and afraid. What do you think frightened them so much about going to Jerusalem this time?

Once again, he took the Twelve aside and taught them about his up-coming suffering, death, and resurrection. It seems clear that Jesus knew that he was to be the great Passover Lamb. We are not told here how they reacted to that teaching this time, but you recall how they had reacted before.

2. The servant spirit versus the competitive spirit (10:35 – 45)

James and John were clearly ambitious and were amazingly bold in asking Jesus to grant them their wish. Ambition and boldness can be valuable, but they can also be very harmful if they are selfishly focused. These disciples obviously had to be corrected to have their ambition and boldness be channeled in the right direction. The other disciples were indignant with them, maybe because they wanted the same things for themselves!

What stands out to you about the servant spirit that Jesus taught?

Verse 45 shows what we always see in the Teacher: *he practiced what he taught!*

3. The healing of blind Bartimaeus (10:46 – 52)

- This took place on the road to Jericho (verse 46). Look that up on the map. This road was known to be dangerous and difficult.
- Why do you think many people rebuked Bartimaeus?
- Jesus asked Bartimaeus to tell him what he wanted (verse 51). Wasn't that obvious? Why do you think Jesus asked that, and how does that apply to us?

It's interesting to note that Jesus' healings often involved difficult physical impairments such as blindness, deafness, leprosy, and crippled limbs. (See **Matthew 15:30 – 31**, for instance.) These were seen in plain sight of everyone and could not be faked or be the result of trickery.

In this journey with Jesus, have you clearly seen him as the Healer?

As you continue to fix your eyes on Jesus, meditate on the amazing thought: "he did not come to be served, but to serve." Pray about how you can imitate that heart and also continue to have the "we've-never-seen-anything-like-this" attitude.

Week 3
Day 5

The Servant Heart

Read *Mark 9:30 – 50*.

Today's Date: _____

1. Suffering, death, and resurrection (9:30 – 32)

At this point, Jesus is teaching the twelve repeatedly about what he is going to experience. Recall the first time he taught these things to them on the road to Caesarea Philippi (8:31 – 32). Peter, for one, reacted strongly at that time to the teaching. This time, the Scripture says that they didn't understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. (Ever been there?)

- Suffering
- Death
- Resurrection

We see these three principles clearly in the life of Jesus. His disciples didn't see it yet, but they understood it later. Jesus also taught his disciples (and us) that these same three principles apply to us. He said that we too will suffer many things at the hands and words of other people for being a disciple; we too will die and be resurrected (literally and figuratively).

2. The servant spirit (9:33 – 37)

How would you like it if Jesus knew what we think and talk about privately (9:33 – 34)? But wait, he does! **Hebrew 4:12 – 13**.

After Jesus revealed that he knew what they were thinking, he taught them a lesson about the serving heart, a topic that he often taught. He, of course, was the ultimate example of what he taught about being a servant. He also clearly wants his disciples to be examples of that as well.

3. "Whoever is not against us is for us." (9:38 – 41)

Our generation of Christianity is not the first one to want to divide and judge others who are not in our particular group. How did Jesus feel about it then, and how do you suppose he feels about it now?

NOTE: this does not imply that we shouldn't oppose false teaching. These people were not doing anything wrong; they just weren't in their group.

4. Jesus' strong stance against personal sin (9:42 – 50)

Jesus clearly said that we should go all out in our effort to avoid sin. How does that apply to you?

NOTE: this is about setting boundaries for your own personal purity, not about judging others or setting boundaries for them. He said to have this "salt" in your own life, but be at peace with others (verse 50).

Jesus clearly has a self-denying heart. Meditate and pray about how this all applies to you. Continue to focus on the memory verse for this week and your willingness to deny self.

Week 3
Day 6

Summary

Today's Date: _____

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's journey of fixing your eyes on Jesus, write a summary of what you know about these three chapters of *Mark* and what they teach you about the self-denying heart of Jesus.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

Week 3
Day 7

Prepare for Worship and Fellowship

Today's Date: _____

This week you have continued your journey with Jesus, fixing your eyes on him, tuning your ears to really hear him, and praying about how to imitate his heart of self-denial. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them also. What are some specific ways you can encourage someone today in these areas?

The Heart
of Jesus

Week 4

The Heart for Love

Mark 10 – 13

Memory Verse for the Week:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.

Mark 12:30 – 31

Week 4
Day 1

The Loving, but Firm, Teacher

Today's Date: _____

Read 10:1 – 31.

1. "As was his custom . . ." (verse 1)

Teaching was not just a routine for Jesus, but it was an integral part of his nature. In this journey with Jesus, have you clearly seen him as your Teacher?

2. He firmly, and courageously, confronted one of their traditions. (10:2 – 12)

He knew that their divorce tradition was the result of hard hearts. Can you see how Jesus' words here confront some of today's marriage traditions?

3. He lovingly received children and firmly corrected the disciples. (10:13 – 16)

The disciples rebuked the people with children. What do you think caused Jesus to be indignant with the disciples about this?

What do you imagine this scene with Jesus and the children looked like?

4. His loving and firm dealings with the rich young man. (10:17 – 31)

"Jesus looked at him and loved him." (verse 21) So why do you think Jesus gave him such a difficult direction?

Verse 27 inspires our faith. The context here involved the difficulty of the rich to enter the kingdom, but Jesus taught it in many other contexts as well. Meditate and pray about your faith in the truth of that statement about faith.

Also, continue to pray for your brothers and sisters this week as they, too, grow in their faith in Jesus.