

Our new mission statement is: *Building Bridges to Connect Everyone to the Dynamic Life in Christ*. But what does being connected and living that life look like and feel like? This spring we will be going through the Book of Mark to discover what it means to live the **Dynamic Life in Christ**. These discussion guides will follow along with the sermon series by using passages from the book of Mark.

These guides will be organized using the acronym HEAR as a way to teach people to read the Bible. HEAR stands for **H**ighlight the passage, **E**xplain the passage, **A**pply the passage, and **R**espond to the passage.

Each week, there will be a page to print off for each member of your group. The printed sheet will have the Bible passage you'll discuss and some questions in the margins to guide them in examining those verses.

Additionally, there will be a leader's guide that will give you helpful notes on the passage (i.e. background information and definitions) as well as discussion questions to lead your group. These don't need to be printed for each member of your group.

These guides are designed to be discussed BEFORE the sermon, so the group can discuss the passage before the pastor shares his insights. However, they can just as easily be used after the weekend message.

Our hope is these tools will (a) help your group members learn to study/read their Bibles outside of the group and (b) give you a helpful outline for facilitating the group discussion. If you have comments or questions about the discussion guides, we'd love to hear your constructive feedback. Send your feedback to us at groups@foresthill.org.

How to Use This Discussion Guide

- Print off the "Life Group Member Guide" for each member of your group – or email it to them in advance.
- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text's theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That's okay! You don't have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, "That's a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we're studying?"
5. **Encourage participation, but don't let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don't allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, "What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?"

We pray that you will hear God speak through Scripture and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His Word.

Date of Sermon: March 15-16, 2020

Topic of Sermon: The Identity of Christ

Main Passage: Mark 1:9 -20

BEFORE your group meeting:

- Look up the main passage in a study Bible and read the study notes
- Print off or send the “Group Member Guide” (page 4) for your group members
- Review the “Group Member Guide” for yourself
- Have enough pens for each group member.

Topic of Life Group Meeting: Learning who Jesus is will help us learn to live a dynamic life in him.

Icebreakers (optional)

- Describe the last time you started something new—a new job, moving to a new city, even trying something new like a class at the gym or a new group at church or in your neighborhood. What do you like about new beginnings? What makes them challenging?
- What skills or tools do you use in your daily work? How did God uniquely make you to be good at your work?

Leader’s Note: Introduce the next part of the group meeting. You can read this introduction or put it in your own words:

“Today, we’re going to spend a few minutes studying the focal passage on our own before we discuss it as a group. I’ve printed out a copy of the Bible passage for you. There are some questions in the margins to help you. Spend most of your time on the Highlight and Explain questions. Feel free to mark up, underline or highlight the passage. We’ll take about 5 minutes.”

When you come back together, use the questions below to guide the discussion.

HIGHLIGHT the Passage

- What key ideas, words or phrases stood out to you from the passage today? What words do you see repeated?
- Did this passage raise any questions for you?
- How would you summarize this passage in your own words? Would anyone else add or emphasize something to that summary?

EXPLAIN the Passage

- What are some things this passage reveals about Jesus? What do we learn about his identity?
- In Mark 1: 4-5 we see John the Baptist (not the disciple John) baptizing people and telling them repent and be forgiven of their sins. Who is baptized in verse 9? Why would he be baptized?
- What do we see the Spirit doing in this passage? What do learn about his character from what we see him doing?
- When Jesus begins his ministry we see him saying “repent and believe in the gospel.” Define repent, believe & gospel in your own words.
- What does Jesus call Simon/Peter, Andrew, James and John to do? Why do you think he said they would become “fishers of men” rather than hunters or farmers or gatherers of men?
- What were the ramifications of the disciples obeying Jesus? Was there a cost to them?

APPLY the Passage

- Galatians 2:20 tells us Christ lives in us, so we take on his identity. What did you see about Christ’s identity that changes how you see yourself?
- If you’ve been baptized, tell the group your story. What did it mean to you? Is it significant to you that Jesus was baptized too? If you have not been baptized but want to learn more about what baptism means, email baptism@foresthill.org. A Forest Hill pastor would love to set-up a time to meet with you.
- Who is Jesus calling you to be as his disciple? What unique words would he use in calling you?
- What did you have to give up to follow Jesus? Is he calling you to give up something that may be keeping you from fully following him?
- What truth from this passage is significant to you? How can you apply it to your life?

RESPOND to the Passage

- Finish your time in prayer, thanking Jesus for who he is in your life. Pray for people that God may be calling you to invite to follow him and opportunities to build bridges that connect them to life in Christ.

COMMENTARY NOTES ON THE MAIN PASSAGE

1:9. Jesus was baptized even though he is free of sin and doesn't need to repent or be forgiven (Heb. 4:15). Mark doesn't tell us why he was baptized, but the gospel of Matthew tells us it was to 'fulfill all righteousness' (Matt. 3:15). Most scholars believe Jesus' baptism identifies him with the sinful people he came to save.

1:10. Your group may notice that the word 'immediately' comes up many times in this passage. Mark uses the Greek word *euthys* which means 'immediately' or 'at once' 42 times in his gospel. It's a word that shows speed and urgency and could be Mark's way of showing the importance of the coming Kingdom of God. It may also demonstrate the purposeful unfolding of the divine plan of Jesus' ministry.

1:10. Although the Bible never uses the word Trinity, this is one of the best 'trinitarian' passages in scripture. It shows both the Spirit and the Father bearing witness to the Son and his identity before he begins his earthly ministry. It is also interesting to note just like all three persons of the Trinity were present at the first creation (Gen. 1:2-3; John 1:1-5, Col. 1:16), all three—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—are present here at the beginning of God's new work of re-creation and restoration of the world.

1:12-13. Mark's description of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness is brief compared to the other gospels, but the key elements are still there: the Spirit, the wilderness, temptation by Satan, and God's help in his weakness. All of these things have echoes of Exodus and Israel wandering in the wilderness for forty years because of their failings. Like Israel, Jesus is beloved and chosen, but he will not give into temptations and fail to fulfill God's purposes.

1:15. Jesus says the 'Kingdom of God is at hand', which means God's ruling power on earth is happening in a new and more immediate way. In a very real way, the people in Galilee will start to see what kind of King God is by experiencing the works of Jesus as he heals and casts out demons. He is good King who is powerful and able to set things right. But there is also a personal component to the Kingdom of God being near which calls for repentance. God is calling for people to change their minds and hearts as He comes and rules their lives and takes over their personal, little kingdoms with His Kingdom and its ways and values.

1:16-20. It may seem odd that Jesus would walk up to these four men and say 'follow me' and that would do it. But we learn from the other gospels that this isn't the first encounter Peter, Andrew, John and James had with Jesus. They had encountered him previously when they were seeing John the Baptist (John 1:35-42). We see in Luke's gospel, that there was a lot more to this encounter as well (Luke 5:1-11). Mark's style is brief and immediate, and it captures only the most important idea. Jesus calls disciples to follow him—a person—not sign-up for a program. He also asks for full commitment, not just that you add discipleship onto your current life.

1:20. When Jesus calls his disciples, they leave their current situations and follow him. This echoes Jesus' call in v. 15 to 'repent and believe'. Becoming a disciple is both changing your current thinking and situation (repenting/leaving) and choosing to trust him and live in a new way (believing/following).

Life Group Member Guide

Focal Passage: Mark 1:9-20 (ESV)

Passage in Context: Mark 1:1-45 (ESV)



Bible-Reading Tip: Begin by asking God to open your eyes and hearts to His Word. In 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, Paul writes that the Spirit – who lives inside everyone who believes in Jesus – knows the depths of God and reveals Him to those who follow Jesus. So, always begin your time of reading the Bible with a prayer for Him to open your eyes and ears to what He will reveal. This doesn't mean that you will always have an emotional encounter or a special revelation, but you are acknowledging that He is that One through whom all wisdom is revealed.

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. “And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. “And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son;” with you I am well pleased.”

“The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. “And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

“Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, “and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;” repent and believe in the gospel.”

“Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. “And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”” “And immediately they left their nets and followed him. “And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. “And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

HEAR Bible Reading Method

HIGHLIGHT the passage

- Underline any repeated words or key ideas you see.
- Note any questions you have about what you read.
- In 2-3 sentences, summarize what was said or what happened.

EXPLAIN the passage

- What was revealed about God? His character, desires, and/or actions?
- What was revealed about people? What we are/do or what we should be/do?

APPLY the passage

- From this reading, what truth do you need to embrace?
- By God’s power, how will you THINK, SPEAK, or ACT differently based on what you read?

RESPOND to the passage

- Talk to God about what you’ve seen and learned in this passage.
- Ask Him to help you apply the truth to your life.