

Session 1

# Calls

*Jesus is the promised Messiah, worthy of being followed.*

Mark 1:9-20



**Who were your heroes when you were growing up? Which of today's famous individuals could you point a child to as a worthy hero? Explain.**

John Glenn became the first person to orbit the earth in 1962. When he died in December 2016, his passing was lamented because he was widely considered one of the last American heroes. Genuine heroes are hard to come by these days. Political leaders are often seen as divisive. Entertainers live outrageously. Titans of industry seem to live only to make another billion.

## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

One feature of Mark's writing style is his emphasis on action, and the early chapters of his Gospel set that tone. Mark painted a picture of a Messiah on the move. Jesus' baptism (1:9-11) marked the beginning of His earthly work, followed quickly by a temptation experience in the wilderness (1:12-13). Through these episodes, Mark showed that Jesus really was the Messiah. The baptism account revealed Jesus' special relationship with the Father, while the temptation spoke to His full humanity and demonstrated His dominion over the enemy.

From those episodes, Jesus jumped into His ministry with both feet, preaching the good news of salvation (1:14-15) and calling disciples to follow Him (1:16-20). Throughout this first chapter—and his entire Gospel—Mark revealed Jesus as a “doer.”

Mark's writing highlights the importance of following Jesus. Jesus called His followers to costly discipleship. The disciples were not simply students learning at the feet of Jesus. They were followers chosen to carry His message to all the world.

Through exorcisms (1:21-28) and physical healings (1:29-45), Jesus demonstrated that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, and worthy of being followed.

# MARK 1:9-20

**9** In **those days** **A** Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. **10** As soon as he came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. **11** And a **voice** **B** came from heaven: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.” **12** Immediately the Spirit drove him into the **wilderness** **C**. **13** He was in the wilderness forty days, being **tempted** **D** by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels were serving him. **14** After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God: **15** “The **time is fulfilled** **E**, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” **16** As he passed alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, Simon’s brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. **17** “Follow me,” Jesus told them, “and I will make you **fish for people** **F**.” **18** Immediately they left their nets and followed him. **19** Going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat putting their nets in order. **20** Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

## Passage Outline

Affirmed (Mark 1:9-11)

Tested (Mark 1:12-13)

Heard (Mark 1:14-15)

Followed (Mark 1:16-20)

## Keywords

- a. When John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness (Mark 1:4-8)
- b. Indicates the audible voice of God, also heard by Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5)
- c. Jesus was led away from people and civilization for 40 days to fast in complete isolation (Matt. 4:2).
- d. Satan’s challenges to Christ were meant to test Him at the foundational points of human weakness: the lust of the eyes and of the flesh and the pride in possessions.
- e. The Old Testament’s prophecy of the coming Messiah was now fulfilled through Jesus.
- f. In the Old Testament, fishermen caught people for God’s judgment (Jer. 16:16-18). Jesus’ disciples would now fish for the salvation of people.

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

While John's baptism symbolized repentance, Jesus was baptized for a different reason. As the sinless Son of God, He didn't need to repent, but He did want to identify with the people He came to save. Also, His baptism marked the beginning of His ministry and revealed His unique relationship with His heavenly Father.

**If a friend asked why you believe Jesus is God's Son, how would you respond?**

**Why is it important to understand and accept His role as Son?**

**KEY DOCTRINE: Baptism** – Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19-20).

The Spirit moved Jesus to journey into the isolation of the wilderness. This change of scenery reminds us that pleasing the Father often requires times of solitude—away from distractions where we can focus on our relationship with God. Jesus experienced the attack from Satan for forty days, but He did not succumb.

**How might knowing that Jesus faced temptation help someone better understand His identity?**

After His time in the wilderness, Jesus returned to His home region of Galilee. Mark summarized the content of Jesus' message as the good news of God. The Greek word for good news is related to our English word "gospel." This gospel was of God. God was intersecting humanity as never before.

**How would you describe Jesus' message in three sentences or less? What sets His message apart from the messages presented by other religious leaders?**

While the Sea of Galilee was relatively small, it provided a solid livelihood for fishermen. It was in this setting that Jesus began calling a group who would be His disciples, hearing the message of the kingdom, learning how to live it out, and sharing it with others.

**What might Jesus ask a modern-day person to leave behind in order to follow Him?**

Jesus' encounter with James and John—along with Andrew and Peter—reminds readers that He often moves during the ordinary moments in life. God calls ordinary people and equips them to do extraordinary things. While it's tempting to wait for a flash of light or a roll of thunder, Jesus usually speaks in the everyday ebb and flow of our daily schedules.

**What do the things a person holds most tightly reveal about what he or she trusts for security? What is the relationship between holding on tightly and faith?**

# APPLY THE TEXT

- Trust in the fact that Jesus is the perfect Son of God.
- We can be confident that Jesus is all-powerful, even over temptation and the tempter.
- Jesus calls us to repent of our sin and believe in Him.
- Jesus' call involves leaving behind what we once trusted and following Him as an expression of trust.

**How would you describe your methods for dealing with temptation? What could you do differently in that area of life? What impact does Jesus' victory over Satan have on your own struggles against temptation?**

**What obstacles hold you back from genuinely repenting of things you know God doesn't want in your life? What steps can you take to eliminate those obstacles?**

**Discuss as a group ways to encourage one another in following Jesus. How can you challenge each other to deepen your trust in Him?**

## Prayer Requests

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# DAILY EXPLORATION

## Day 1: Jesus is the Son of God.

*Read Mark 1:10-11, marking the introduction of the Holy Spirit and the voice of God.*

Mark stated that the heavens were torn open, a phrase he would use later in the narrative to describe the temple's veil being ripped at Jesus' death (Mark 15:38). Here, it represents the further invasion of earth by heaven. God was inserting Himself into the story of humanity.

Verse 10 is also significant for its introduction of the Holy Spirit, which would have held Messianic implications for the Jews. God had gone silent for more than four centuries, and most Jews believed this prophetic silence would be broken when the Spirit arrived and anointed the Messiah. Therefore, the presence of the Spirit both confirmed Jesus' role as Messiah and emphasized the power He received to fulfill that task.

The voice of the Father completes the appearance of the Trinity in this passage, making this account a primary text for believers as they study the doctrine of the Trinity. However, it also affirms once again that Jesus was the Messiah. Mark began his Gospel by identifying Jesus as God's Son (1:1). Here, the Father confirmed their unique relationship and added His blessing.

**Why is it important for you to understand and accept Jesus' role as the Son of God?**

## Day 2: Jesus faced temptations.

*Read Mark 1:12-13, considering the temptations Jesus faced.*

While other Gospel writers provided specifics about Satan's temptations (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13), Mark simply noted that Jesus experienced the attack for forty days—leaving the reader to understand that Jesus did not succumb. This was not the only time He encountered the enemy's temptations. Jesus' entire ministry was consistently under attack, not just in this isolated event in the desert. God often allows those whom He has chosen for service to endure trials and temptations before He uses them greatly. It tests them and prepares them for what lies ahead.

The wild animals reflect how intense and dangerous the experience was, even for Jesus. The presence of angels emphasizes that we all need divine help when dealing with the schemes of Satan. Scholars are divided on whether the angels strengthened Jesus during the temptation or provided comfort afterward. There is no reason to believe they did not do both.

**How does knowing that Jesus faced temptation help you face temptation in your own life?**

### Day 3: Following Jesus requires repentance.

*Read Mark 1:14-15, noting the three points of Jesus' message.*

Jesus' primary message included three basic points. First, He announced "the time is fulfilled." This Greek word for time (*kairos*) relates to a proper or favorable time for an event. The time had come for God to do something amazing among His people.

Second, Jesus explained the result of this timing. In one sense, the kingdom was near because Jesus was near. But Jesus was also building a unique kingdom where citizens are known by their allegiance to Christ and are waiting for Him to establish an actual, physical kingdom in the future.

Finally, Jesus said that the kingdom's presence demanded a response. He challenged His audience to repent and believe the good news. Repentance requires a rejection of what is old and earthly, while belief embraces the good news of the kingdom.

**How do you participate in the kingdom as a believer on this side of heaven?**

**How does Jesus help with this?**

### Day 4: Following Jesus requires commitment.

*Read Mark 1:17-18, looking for the response to Jesus' request.*

The call to follow meant more than simply walking alongside or creating a teacher-pupil relationship. Instead, Jesus challenged them to leave the past behind, surrender, and submit. By following Him, Andrew and Peter would be sacrificing their own desires and making His mission their mission.

This invitation also came with a promise. While they would hang up their nets, they would also get the opportunity to be His witnesses and lead people into the kingdom of God. This was an urgent task that required an urgent response. The response of the fishermen was quick and decisive. Andrew and Peter were completely committed. They had seen and heard enough to believe that Jesus was different, and they were willing to lay everything else aside to follow Him.

**What might Jesus call you to leave behind—or embrace—to follow Him?**

**BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible atlas and Bible dictionary (print version or on the Internet) to locate and learn about places mentioned in Scripture.** – Find the location of Galilee, Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, and the Jordan River in a Bible atlas. (Tip: check the atlas index or search on the Internet.) Then use a Bible dictionary to learn more about these places. What are some significant facts about these places that help you better understand Mark 1?



## Day 5: Following Jesus requires sacrifice.

**Read Mark 1:19-20, underlining verse 20.**

It was a different location with different fishermen, but the results were the same. Jesus called, and James and John came. However, Mark also mentioned that they left behind their father Zebedee and the hired men involved in the family business. In addition to walking away from their jobs, James and John moved away from the security of family relationships—and possibly a larger stake in the business later on.

While family members working together was a given in that culture, only those who did well could bring in extra help. So the hired men indicate that Zebedee's family enjoyed a degree of wealth. Despite this success, James and John still followed Jesus.

**What factors might have prompted the disciples to leave their occupations to follow Jesus? Consider if you would be willing to leave your occupation to follow Jesus.**



## TALK IT OUT

**Reflect on the truths found in Mark 1, sharing with two other members of your Bible study group.**

How do we demonstrate Jesus' authority in our lives?

Jesus' temptation followed His baptism. Tell about a time you faced a spiritual struggle soon after a spiritual high point.

What do the events and people in Mark 1:1-20 teach you about God's character? Why do you want to follow someone with this character?



For additional context, read “Mark, the Man and His Gospel” and “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” in the Spring 2019 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at [LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator](http://LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator).