



Bible Study
2014-2015

Heart of a Servant The Gospel of Mark

LESSON 1

Have you ever noticed how many things in life require preparation in advance? If you are an athlete, you prepare your body and skills for upcoming competition. When you plant a garden, you first prepare the soil to receive the seeds that need a healthy environment to grow. If you are going on a trip, there is a myriad of things to plan, pack, and get in order before you leave. Think of all the preparation that goes into a baby entering a family!

Even more amazing is to think about our God, Who from the beginning of time, before the creation of man, prepared the world for His arrival. Not only that, but before Adam and Eve were made, before that first sin-filled bite of independence, God has a plan of redemption. When flood judgment was coming to a world swimming in rebellion, there was an ark prepared by Noah. When chastening came upon a prophet named Jonah, the Lord prepared a “fish.” When Jesus was to fulfill prophecy in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, there was a donkey in waiting.

**God is a planner Who makes preparation for the good
of His people and His glory.**

As we begin the first chapter in the gospel of Mark, you will read the great lengths God went to, in order to prepare people’s hearts for their coming Messiah. Etch the truth across your thoughts that He is no different today (Hebrews 13:8). When we watch Jesus in a solitary, but repetitious confrontation with the devil, it is in preparation for His public ministry. Finally, once this ministry has begun, Jesus chooses specific men to be His disciples in order to prepare them for the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church.

Before the world was made, until its ultimate end, God’s gracious work towards you and me, is relentless preparation for our eternity. Realize that you are not doing this devotional study by chance, but the Lord has chosen this time to prepare your heart, soul, and mind, for what lies ahead. Isn’t He gracious?!

“As in the case of prayer, when God prepares the heart to pray, He prepares His ear to hear (Ps. 10:17). So in the case of spiritual hunger, when God prepares the heart to hunger, He will prepare His hand to fulfill.”

~ Thomas Watson

Read Mark 1:1-8

1. So we begin by reading about a man named John who was called by God with a divine mission and message. According to verses 4 and 6, “where” did he carry out his ministry and “what” were his outward appearance and mannerisms like?
 - a. The coming of Jesus was prophesied in Isaiah 53:2. The word “comeliness” literally means “splendor”. Write this verse out in your own words.

 - b. We live in a culture that worships the outward appearance and markets what will attract people visually. If we are not careful, we can also be led by what we see. Even God’s prophet Samuel made this mistake when he was summoned by the Lord to anoint His choice as Israel’s king. Read 1 Samuel 16:6-7. What two things did the Lord say Samuel was NOT to look at?

Write in all capital letters the ONE key characteristic the Lord looks at:

*“The Lord’s word may come to me through a mangy donkey
or the beauty of a starlit twilight.
My eyes better not be in charge of hearing His voice.” ~ Anonymous*

2. In Luke’s gospel, you also read how John’s “righteous” parents were being prepared by the Lord for their son’s miraculous arrival into their lives. Despite being elderly and Elizabeth being barren, an angelic messenger was sent to Zacharias as he was serving in the temple as a priest. Read Luke 1:11-17.
 - a. Regardless of John’s outward appearance, the Lord used one word to describe how John would appear in HIS sight. What was it?

- b. In verses 16 and 17, John is used by God to “turn” people’s lives around. Describe the effects of John’s “turning” messages.
- c. In Matthew 11:11, what does Jesus say about John?
- d. In Mark 1:7, the Lord gives us a second key into the character of men and women He chooses to work through. Despite John’s powerful ministry, his being the greatest prophet of the old covenant, his life being prophesied about 1,000s of years earlier and his birth being announced by an angel, what does John say about his worthiness to serve the Lord?

Read Mark 1:9-15

3. After reading verses 9-11, look up Isaiah 55:6-9 and use this message to prepare your heart a “straight path” for the coming of the Lord through His Word. Write out a short prayer in response to this exhortation.

4. Though Mark only summarizes the time of Jesus' temptation by Satan in the wilderness in two verses (12, 13), Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 give many more details.
- a. Jesus went INTO the wilderness being filled to overflowing with what, according to Luke 4:1?

 - b. After He defeated Satan by *submissive obedience* to His Father and through the authority of the *scriptures*, how did He come OUT of the wilderness according to verse 14?

 - c. Have you ever gone through a "wilderness" type of experience in your life? If so, briefly describe the experience and how you came OUT of this spiritually.
5. John's message to the people was essentially "prepare your hearts for the Messiah." Then as Jesus begins His public ministry, what message did He begin to preach according to Mark 1:15?

Reflection question: Why is it imperative that a person do both things: repent AND believe? Why isn't just one or the other sufficient? If you are able, find a scripture to support your answer.

Read Mark 1:16-20

6. It's only the Lord that can take our ordinary chores, jobs or careers and transform them into something supernatural. Fill in the blanks from verse 18:

They _____ left....and _____ Him.

a. Has there ever been a time when Jesus has asked you to leave something (or someone) behind and follow Him? Did you respond immediately or did you delay? Briefly describe.

b. When the Lord calls us to follow Him, there is no higher calling, no better direction, and no greater companionship on the earth. When Peter began to boast about all that he had given up and left behind in order to follow the Lord, what did Jesus say in response to him from Luke 18:29-30?

- d. When the Lord was bringing judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19, what was the angel's warning to Lot's wife in verse 17 and what was her response in verse 26?

“The kingdom of heaven is worth infinitely more than the cost of discipleship, and those who know where the treasure lies joyfully abandon everything else to secure it.” ~ D. A. Carson

Read Mark 1:21-34 with the understanding that all of this occurred on one day!

At the beginning of our lesson, we read how Jesus was alone in the wilderness undergoing an intense battle inwardly and outwardly for forty days. He had to fight Satan and the power of darkness while resisting His flesh that was under the constant assault of temptation. He was also surrounded by dangerous beasts amidst the rugged elements in the wilderness. No one will ever face greater temptations, fight more powerful warfare, or endure greater sufferings than Jesus did in His lifetime. Now out from the veil of privacy, He openly begins to deal with many of mankind's inward and outward enemies.

8. Look up John 8:12 and 9:5. What title and attribute does He give Himself?

- a. If possible, look this verse up in the New Living Translation or the Amplified version for a fuller understanding. What condition is placed on a person in order to benefit from this attribute of God?

9. Light reveals what is present and expels darkness. And right in the synagogue, where the Word of God was read and taught and hymns were sung, darkness sat comfortably. I wonder how many times this demonically possessed man occupied a seat in God's house? Yet, the prince of darkness cannot hide from the Light of the world. Before you were born again, can you remember a time when you were with a Christian or in a place that was lifting Jesus up and you were uncomfortable? Explain.

- a. **Read Matthew 5:14-16.** Now that Jesus dwells in our hearts by faith, WE are individual lights in the darkness of the world. Write out the first section of verse 16.

There's a 3-letter word that Jesus uses to reveal that it is a decision of our will, an act of surrender. Write it in capital letters.

- b. When we allow (or let), the Holy Spirit within us will produce the "light" through our good works. What is the SOLE purpose in others being allowed to see your good works?

- c. Knowing this principle, the Lord may lead us through dark times and dark places where He desires His light to be shone. This does NOT mean we are called to occupy bar stools or sit through bad movies with others. It may mean holding a hard job with unbelievers or going to school with atheists, attending a difficult family reunion or going on a missions trip. Are you challenged in this area? Are there times where it is difficult to "let" the Lord shine through your life? Explain.

- d. Write out Ephesians 5:8 in your own words and a prayer regarding whatever has been stirred in your heart concerning shining as a light in dark places.

*“But the path of the just is like the shining sun,
That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.” Prov. 4:18*

Read Mark 1:35-39

10. After a very busy day with a full evening of ministering to other people, what do we read that Jesus did in Mark 1:35? When and where did He do this?
- a. When the disciples find Jesus, what do they let him know in verse 37?
- b. Do you ever feel weighed down by the needs of others? We may be responsible to serve our husbands and children, but it IS possible to feel pulled to take care of needs that have not been given to us by the Lord. Jesus sought His Father before He started His day, away from other people, so when the pressure came in meeting the needs of those the disciples spoke of, Jesus responded that He was going in the opposite direction. What TWO things does Jesus say about His actions in John 8:28-29 (notice the word ‘do’)?

- c. Look up the prayer requests written in Psalm 143:10 and Psalm 25:5, 9. Use these to write a prayer request of your own to the Lord, remembering Jesus' pattern of prayer in receiving the Father's will and direction.

“Time spent in prayer will yield more than that given to work. Prayer alone gives work its worth and its success. Prayer opens the way for God Himself to do His work in us and through us. Let our chief work as God’s messengers be intercession; in it we secure the presence and power of God to go with us.” ~ Andrew Murray

Read Mark 1:40-45

Back in Jesus' day, when a person came down with leprosy, it was a “living” death sentence. They not only suffered with an incurable, debilitating, disfiguring and humiliating disease, they would have to leave their home, family and friends to live out the rest of their days in a segregated colony outside the camp or city with other lepers. As time progressed, the leper would suffer from hideous facial deformity, open sores and rotting members all over the body. It was a disease that was viewed as punishment from the Lord (2 Chron. 26:20). Easton's Bible Dictionary has this to say about the leper:

“But wherever he was, he was required to have his outer garment torn as a sign of deep grief, to go bareheaded, and to cover his beard with his mantle, as if in lamentation at his own virtual death. He had further to warn passers-by to keep away from him, by calling out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ nor could he speak to any one, or receive or return a salutation, since in the East this involves an embrace.”

11. Now that we see the life of a leper, write down the four things the leper did to Jesus in verse 40.

1)

3)

2)

4)

- a. If you imagine yourself in this scenario as a disciple, what do you think you would have felt, thought, done or said when you saw the leper coming? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the truth of how you probably would have responded.

- b. Leprosy is used in scripture as a picture or “type” of sin. It is an uncleanness that requires cleansing and a trespass and sin offering (Leviticus 14:12, 19). We are all born with leprosy (Psalm 51:5) and can only be declared healed and cleansed by believing and receiving Jesus Christ, Who made Himself an offering for our trespasses and sins (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

How does this leper affect Jesus (verses 41-42)?

- c. ***Personal Reflection:*** Now imagine being in a hospital waiting room and someone comes and sits next to you that is unkempt, seems unhealthy, “unattractive” and asks you about the Christian book in your hand.

Or it might be at the office where a woman dresses extremely provocative, has a sin-filled reputation, uses vulgar and profane language in normal conversation, but asks you if you would take them to church Sunday morning.

Use either of these scenarios or one you have lived through when you had great difficulty in responding like Jesus did, or a time you struggled with compassion and found it difficult to reach out practically to help someone’s life. Record it below.

- d. End by recording today's date and writing a prayer that the Lord will fill your heart with His love and compassion for the "lepers" you meet in life. Then thank Him that your own leprosy did not keep Him from touching and cleansing you from all of your disease.

*Compassion costs. It is easy enough to argue, criticize
and condemn, but redemption is costly,
and comfort draws from the deep. Brains can argue,
but it takes heart to comfort."
~ Samuel Chadwick*

*"Compassion is sometimes the fatal capacity for feeling what it is like to live inside
somebody else's skin. It is the knowledge that there can never really be any
peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too."
~ F. Buechner*