

# Living for God in God's World

– making the ordinary special

STUDY NOTES  
JANUARY 2014

## *Good News in East Reading*

*God getting worshipped, a lot more people becoming Christians,  
the neighbourhood getting blessed and we all get to know God  
better in the process*

How can God  
help in my  
challenges?



Can I see  
Jesus in my  
life?



How can I  
follow his  
example?



How can I  
show Jesus  
to others?



**WYCLIFFE**  
BAPTIST CHURCH  
Good News in East Reading

*These notes are provided as a guide for our collective learning and worship programme at Wycliffe for January 2014. They provide an outline of the Sunday teaching material, and include study notes for Housegroups, plus suggested prayer topics.*

*The passages being studied in each of our four Sunday services are listed below. The exact passages and dates may differ between services.*

*Note that there may be more studies than Housegroup meetings (recognising that Housegroups have various schedules for meeting). Please use the studies which you feel are most appropriate.*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Morning Services</b>	<b>6:30 Service</b>
05-Jan	<i>"Living for God in God's World"</i>	<i>Living for God in God's World</i>
12-Jan	Mark 1 <i>"Get Ready!"</i>	Mark 1 <i>"Follow the Love Revolutionary"</i> - Baptism Service
19-Jan	<i>Communion Service Worship in Spirit and in Truth</i>	Mark 1:32-39; <i>The Love Revolution Begins</i>
26-Jan	Mark 2:1-17; <i>What Jesus brings- Healing &amp; Forgiveness</i>	Mark 2:1-17: <i>An Easy Step to Perfection</i>

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## The Gospel of Mark

The teaching programme for the first 6 months of 2014 is based mainly on the Gospel of Mark.

Mark presents the challenge of who Jesus is and the call He has on our lives. He introduces us to Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. It is his world. Jesus demonstrates this by his authoritative teaching, by his power over demons, sickness, death and nature. He shows that he has authority to forgive sin.

But Jesus is the “servant”. And he calls us to take up our cross and follow him: this is the only way to find life.

Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels. The material is very similar to Matthew, but it doesn't include the account of the nativity, and it includes very little of the teaching of Jesus; it's filled with action. It is believed to be the first to be written.

It was written by Mark, generally believed to be the John Mark referred to eight times elsewhere in the New Testament.

*Papias*, a Christian writing about 130 AD, recorded the connection between Mark and Peter, who was one of the 12 apostles: 'Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered.' It is based on information supplied by the apostle Peter, who knew Jesus better than anyone; reading Mark puts us directly in touch with the historical Jesus.

Each of the Gospels gives a different description of Jesus. In Mark, although our attention is drawn to Jesus as the Son of God, we see him in action as the Servant of God. We're called to follow his example:

*“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* Mark 10:43-45

## ***Study 1 – Living for God in God’s World***

*The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it. Psalm 24:1*

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God – <sup>2</sup> the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures <sup>3</sup> regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, <sup>4</sup> and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 1:1-4*

“There are many challenges facing us as we aim to be disciples of Christ in the world. One in particular is pressing: the need to bridge the gap between what we do and say in church on Sundays and how we live for the rest of the week.

“The challenge this presents is getting bigger – not because the Gospel is changing, but because the environment in the western world is becoming less Christian.” (from the 2014 Church Plan)

There are a number of Biblical themes that underlie our attitude to the world around us and the lives we live. One is *Creation*: if God created the universe then it is His – every bit of it. Another theme is *Salvation*: as Christians we have accepted that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord. *Lord* is indeed a title, but it is much more than that. It is an expression of our commitment to walk in his ways.

*“There is not a square inch of in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry ‘Mine!’”*

Abraham Kuypers, at the Free University of Amsterdam, 1880

## ***Discussion questions***

1. Look again at Psalm 24. What are the implications of this for how we view:
  - The created, physical world around us?
  - Beliefs and ideas about truth, justice, politics?
  - Our own personal lifestyles – eg the things we own?
2. Is there a sacred / secular divide in your thinking? (i.e. are there areas of our lives that we think are important to God, and which therefore we need to practise our discipleship in, whereas others “don’t matter” to God).
3. If someone becomes a Christian, and therefore acknowledges the Lordship of Christ, how might this effect:
  - their beliefs about truth, and the Bible in particular?
  - their attitude to their personal relationships and their family?
  - their attitude to poverty and injustice in the world?
  - their attitude to their work?
4. Share in the group what the challenges are at places of work (or study or other main activity). Discuss what the Biblical principles of creation and the Lordship of Christ might speak into these situations.

In what ways can we as a Christian community demonstrate the love of God and the kingdom of God in east Reading?

***Pray for each other  
facing challenges in  
work and life this  
year***

## **Study 2 – Mark 1:1-20; “Get Ready!”**

Mark begins his gospel by suggesting to us his purpose in writing (“this is the beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup>, the Son of God”). In the Gospel he will show us that Jesus is the Son of God, and that it is good news to follow him.

After a short account of John the Baptist “preparing the way”, we’re presented with Jesus being baptised and being tempted. After John the Baptist has been arrested Jesus steps forward, declaring the kingdom of God. He calls his first disciples: the story has begun!

### *Discussion questions*

1. Mark has written his “Gospel”; it gives an account of Jesus’ life. What is the difference between a *Gospel* and a *biography*?
2. What is the significance of there being a reference to Isaiah right at the beginning<sup>2</sup> (v2-3)?
3. Why do you think so many people went to be baptised by John (v5)? Did he resemble another prophet? (See 2Kings 1:8)
4. What is important about the distinction John makes between his ministry and that of Jesus (v7-8)<sup>3</sup>? See also Ezekiel 36:25-27; who pours out the Spirit? What is your experience of the Holy Spirit in your life?
5. Why was Jesus baptised, if he didn’t have to repent of his sin?
6. What happened when Jesus was baptised, (v10-11)? Why is it important that Mark recorded this? Is this a demonstration of the Trinity? Does it help us to see that Jesus is the Son of God?<sup>4</sup>
7. What does this passage tell us about the temptation of Jesus?
8. What was Jesus’ first message? What is *repentance*? What do you understand by the *kingdom of God*?

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<sup>1</sup> The New NIV reads “the Messiah”, the Hebrew word for the *Anointed One*, as opposed to *Christ*, which is the Greek word. (The NIV appears to choose Messiah or Christ randomly to translate the same Greek word!)

<sup>2</sup> See Isaiah 40:9-11; 52:7-10; 61:1-4. Note the first part of the reference is from Malachi – as an introduction to Isaiah)

<sup>3</sup> John’s reference to the Holy Spirit is quoted in all four Gospels.

<sup>4</sup> See also Isaiah 42:1a; Psalm 2:7; Genesis 22:2)

9. Peter was at his work when Jesus called him. Do you ever encounter Jesus in your work?
10. Consider the changes in the lives of these four fishermen from Galilee. What transformed them? Do you expect / have you noticed changes in your life since you started to follow Jesus?

***Looking ahead***

- **Who recognised that Jesus is the Christ? (8:29)**
- **Who recognised that he is the Son of God? (15:39)**

## ***Study 3 – Mark 1:21-45; The Authority of Jesus***

Mark is a Gospel about activities and not about words. Mark aims to show how what Jesus did points to his true identity – the Christ, the Son of God.

So in this section we see Jesus' power – over evil spirits and over sickness. We see him show *compassion* as he responds to the needs of someone with leprosy. We notice the nature of his teaching – *with authority*.

### *Discussion questions*

1. The first miracle recorded by Mark is the casting out of an evil spirit (v23-26), who recognised who Jesus is. This follows the temptation of Jesus by Satan (v13). What does this say about the nature of evil in the world?
2. Would you recognise demon possession if you saw it today?
3. Jesus' words had power (v22, 27; cf 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5). Do we experience power in our ministry and preaching? If not, why not?
4. Was Jesus' ministry *just* healing (v38)? What was his priority? How do we prioritise areas of our witness and work?
5. How did Jesus decide what he should do next (v 35-39)? How do we decide these questions in our lives?
6. Why did Jesus tell people to keep silent about the healings he had done (v 43-45)<sup>5</sup>? How do we know when to speak and when not to speak?
7. If we are in this kingdom of God which Jesus preached, how do we confront evil and care for - and heal - the sick?
8. Preaching and teaching the word was central to Jesus' ministry – he wasn't just a healer<sup>6</sup> (v15,22,38). How do we share the word of God?
9. We read that Jesus was *filled with compassion*<sup>7</sup> (v41)? Are we compassionate? How can we make compassion positive (i.e. driving us to action) rather than negative (just makes us feel bad)?

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<sup>5</sup> Compare Mark 5:19

<sup>6</sup> "Preach the Gospel at all times; use words if necessary" is a nice saying, but it almost certainly wasn't what St Francis of Assisi said, and it doesn't follow the example of Jesus!

<sup>7</sup> NIV 1984. New NIV uses a different word!



***Jesus***

- Preached the good news
- Confronted evil
- Healed the sick
- Showed compassionate to the needy
- Planned his way with prayer

*Do we follow his example?*

## ***Study 4 – Mark 2:1-17; Healing and Forgiveness***

In the previous chapter we saw how Jesus began to demonstrate who he is by his teaching, his power over evil spirits and over sickness, and by his compassion. In this passage we see his claim to another power – the authority to forgive sins. This marks a change in the context of his ministry; he begins to experience the opposition of the Jewish religious leaders. However he demonstrates, by healing a lame man instantly, that he *does* have authority to forgive sins. In doing this he gives substance to the claim that he is the Son of God.

The opposition continues as he is seen to mix with “tax collectors and sinners”, and even calls one, Levi<sup>8</sup>, to be his disciple.

### *Discussion questions*

1. Why do so many people flock to meet Jesus (v1-2)? If we are individually his disciples and collectively his body on earth, wouldn't we expect that we should attract people to Jesus? If we don't, why not?
2. Who brought the paralysed man to Jesus (v3)? What lesson is there here for us (especially in their persistence?)
3. If you were one of the four men who brought your friend for healing, how would you have felt when you hear Jesus forgiving his sin (v5)?
4. Why did Jesus say this, rather than healing the lame man straight away?
5. Which is the easier to say (v9)?
6. Were the teachers of the law right or wrong (v 6-7)? Argue the case!
7. What are we expected to understand when we see Jesus healing the lame man (v 10-12)?
8. *The call of Levi.* Why do you think that Jesus chose to accept Jesus' invitation to become a disciple (v14)? What made *you* decide to follow Jesus?
9. What sort of example does Jesus' choice of friends set for us (v15-17)?
10. Looking back at the whole of the passage – and back into chapter 1 – which is more important, the forgiveness of sins or the healing of our sicknesses? (Or is this an unfair question?!)

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<sup>8</sup> Levi is assumed to be another name for Matthew (see Matthew 9:9)

*To consider:*

If we are individually Jesus' disciples and collectively his body on earth, wouldn't we expect that we should attract people to Jesus?

If we don't, why not?

## ***Study 5 – Worship in Spirit and in Truth***

### ***Principles of worship***

Our Sunday services are “worship services”; although there are different styles we should endeavour to bear in mind the following principles:

***In our worship services we aim to encounter God, Father and Son through the Holy Spirit, in His word, in prayer and in meeting each other, in a way which produces love and awe in our hearts, praise on our lips, and discipleship in our lives.***

Spelling this out:

*We aim to encounter God*

God wants to meet with his people (the Tabernacle in Exodus; the church gathered is the NT equivalent); He will be present. We should recognise Him

*Father, Son, Holy Spirit*

We are Trinitarian and we’re Christians; we don’t just worship any “god”

*Through the Spirit*

We need to depend on the Lord for everything we do; we don’t just plan a meeting or organise an event

*In His word*

Our worship should flow from what we learn of God in His word

*In Prayer*

As we wait on the Lord in prayer, we expect to meet with Him and hear from Him

*In meeting each other*

Corporate worship is different from private devotions. The promise is “where 2 or 3 come together in my name”. This is partly different by its very nature (2 or 3 or 200 is different from one. By being together we express the temple of the living God in a different

way). And it's practical – we learn from testimony / words of encouragement / prophetic words / different insights

... *produces love and awe*

our whole being should be moved (“... with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”).

... *(produces) praise on our lips*

spoken and sung praises to God is a very real part of worship (though NT references are slim until we come to Revelation!)

... *(produces) discipleship*

the Bible indicates that worship that doesn't affect our lives is not acceptable to God (Amos 5:18-24; contrast Genesis 22:5)

### *Discussion questions*

1. What do you think of when you hear the word “worship”? Why? Do you think this is the Bible use of the term?
2. Is *worship* the same as *praising the Lord* (as in the Psalms, for example)?
3. Look at some Bible references to *worship*<sup>9</sup>. What do you learn from them?
4. What helps *you* in worship?
5. How do you *prepare* to come to a worship service? (Or do you just “turn up”?)
6. In practice, what should a worship service include? (The NT is not specific. Examples would be given in: Acts 4:42-48; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Colossians 3:16; Colossians 1:28)

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<sup>9</sup> Examples – you don't need to study all of these! Genesis 22:4-6; Exodus 4:22-24; Exodus 20:3-6; 1 Samuel 1 :2-4; 2Kings 17:6-8; 1 Chronicles 6:28-30; 2 Chronicles 7:2-4; Nehemiah 8:5-7; Nehemiah 9:2-4; Psalm 95:5-7; Daniel 3:10; Matthew 2:11; Matthew 14:33; Matthew 28:16-18; John 4:20-24; Acts 13:1-3; Acts 24:14; Romans 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 14:24-26; Hebrews 10:1-3; Revelation 5:13-14; Revelation 14:6-8;

## ***Suggested topics for prayer***

### ***Thanksgiving***

- Reflect on what the Lord did for us as a Church in 2013, and give thanks
- Share individual things for which you are thankful, and give thanks together.

### ***Week of prayer***

- If you attended the Week of Prayer at the start of the year, then please share some of the thoughts you had from this.

### ***Persecuted Church***

- Our Christmas offering was for Release International, to help Christians who are suffering, particularly in Middle Eastern countries. Share information you know of Christians in these areas, and pray for them.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Plus Ministries***

*10 million people in the UK are over 65 years old. The latest projections are for 5½ million more elderly people in 20 years time and the number will have nearly doubled to around 19 million by 2050. (From [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk))*

- Pray for PLUS, our own ministry which aims to “*embrace later years*”
- Pray for members of Wycliffe who now live in Care Homes; pray for those – including some in our fellowship - who work in Care Homes
- Pray for our government bodies (Pensions, Social Services, NHS, etc) as they make provision for an ageing population

### ***Church based items***

- *Christianity Explored*, starting on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> January
- Nathan, starting his placement at Shinfield Baptist Church on 12<sup>th</sup> January
- Our witness in the Kennet Walk area

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. I Thessalonians 5:16-18*

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<sup>10</sup> More than 70% of the world’s peoples now live in nations where religious freedom is gravely restricted, and the situation is growing worse