



Gospel of Mark Bible Study

Session #4 October 6th – October 11th Mark 2:18 – 3:35

Tuesday 6am @LW – Tuesday 5:15pm @AV

Wednesday 10am & 6:15pm @LW

Sunday 10:30am @AV

Jesus Questioned About Fasting - Mark 2:18-22 Life Application Notes

2:18ff John had two goals: to lead people to repent of their sin, and to prepare them for Christ's coming. John's message was sobering, so he and his followers fasted. Fasting is both an outward sign of humility and regret for sin, and an inner discipline that clears the mind and keeps the spirit alert. Fasting empties the body of food; repentance empties the life of sin. Jesus' disciples did not need to fast to prepare for his coming because he was with them. Jesus did not condemn fasting, however. He himself fasted for 40 days (Matthew 4:2). Nevertheless, Jesus emphasized fasting with the right motives. The Pharisees fasted twice a week to show others how holy they were. Jesus explained that if people fast only to impress others, they will be twisting the purpose of fasting.

2:19 Jesus compared himself to a bridegroom. In the Bible, the image of a bride is often used for God's people, and the image of a bridegroom for the God who loves them (Isaiah 62:5; Matthew 25:1-14; Rev. 21:2).

2:22 A wineskin was a goatskin sewed together at the edges to form a watertight bag. New wine, expanding as it aged, stretched the wineskin. New wine, therefore, could not be put into a wineskin that had already been stretched, or the taut skin would burst.

The Pharisees had become rigid like old wineskins. They could not accept faith in Jesus that would not be contained or limited by man-made ideas or rules. Your heart, like a wineskin, can become rigid and prevent you from accepting the new life that Christ offers. Keep your heart pliable and open to accepting the life-changing truths of Christ.

Study Questions:

1. What is the longest amount of time you ever went without food? When?
2. What dilemma puzzled the people who came to Jesus? (2:18)
3. How did Jesus' story of the wedding feast answer the people's question about why His disciples did not fast? (2:19-20)
4. Why did Jesus tell two short stories? (2:21-22)
5. What steps can you take this week to practice a spiritual discipline (fasting, prayer, Bible study, meditation, solitude, simplicity, etc.)?

Lord of the Sabbath - Mark 2:23-3:6 Life Application Notes

2:23 Jesus and his disciples were not stealing when they picked the grain. Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deut. 23:25 say that farmers were to leave the edges of their fields unharvested so that some of their crops could be picked by travelers and by the poor. Just as walking on a sidewalk is not trespassing on private property, picking heads of grain at the edge of a field was not stealing.

2:24 God's law said that crops should not be harvested on the Sabbath (Exodus 34:21). This law prevented farmers from becoming greedy and ignoring God on the Sabbath. It also protected laborers from being overworked.

The Pharisees interpreted the action of Jesus and his disciples-picking the grain and eating it as they walked through the fields-as harvesting; and so they judged Jesus a lawbreaker. But Jesus and the disciples clearly were not harvesting the grain for personal gain; they were simply looking for something to eat. The Pharisees were so focused on the words of the rule that they missed its intent.

2:24 Many of the Pharisees were so caught up in their man-made laws and traditions that they lost sight of what was good and right. Jesus implied in Mark 3:4 that the Sabbath is a day to do good. God provided the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship, but he didn't mean that concern for rest should keep us from lifting a finger to help others. Don't allow your Sabbath to become a time of selfish indulgence.

2:25-28 Jesus used the example of David to point out how ridiculous the Pharisees' accusations were (this incident occurred in 1 Samuel 21:1-6). God created the Sabbath for our benefit, not his own. God derives no benefit from having us rest on the Sabbath, but we are restored both physically and spiritually when we take time to rest and to focus on God. For the Pharisees, Sabbath laws had become more important than Sabbath rest. Both David and Jesus understood that the intent of God's law is to promote love for God and others. When we apply a law to other people, we should make sure that we understand its purpose and intent so we don't make harmful or inappropriate judgments.

2:26 The "consecrated bread" was the bread set before God in the tabernacle. Every Sabbath, 12 baked loaves of bread were placed on the table in the Holy Place. Then the priests ate the old ones. See Exodus 25:30 and Leviticus 24:5-9 for more about the consecrated bread, also called the bread of the Presence.

3:2 Already the Pharisees had turned against Jesus. They were jealous of his popularity, his miracles, and the authority in his teaching and actions. They valued their status in the community and their opportunity for personal gain so much that they lost sight of their goal as religious leaders—to point people toward God. Of all people, the Pharisees should have recognized the Messiah, but they refused to acknowledge him because they were not willing to give up their treasured position and power. When Jesus exposed their attitudes, he became their enemy instead of their Messiah, and they began looking for ways to turn the people against him.

3:5 Jesus was angry about the Pharisees' uncaring attitudes. Anger itself is not wrong. It depends on what makes us angry and what we do with our anger. Too often we express our anger in selfish and harmful ways. By contrast, Jesus expressed his anger by correcting a problem—healing the man's hand. Use your anger to find constructive solutions rather than to tear people down.

3:6 The Pharisees were a Jewish religious group that zealously followed the Old Testament laws, as well as their own religious traditions. They were highly respected in the community, but they hated Jesus because he challenged their proud attitudes and dishonorable motives.

The Herodians were a Jewish political party that hoped to restore Herod the Great's line to the throne. Jesus was a threat to them as well because he challenged their political ambitions. The Pharisees and Herodians, normally enemies, joined forces against Jesus because he exposed them for what they were.

3:6 The Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking their law that said medical attention could be given to no one on the Sabbath except in matters of life and death. Ironically, the Pharisees themselves were breaking God's law by plotting murder.

Study Questions:

1. What did the disciples do that outraged the Pharisees? (2:24)
2. What was Jesus' response to the Pharisees' charges? (2:25-27)
3. According to Jesus, why were the disciples of both David and Jesus justified in breaking the Sabbath? (2:25-27)
4. When have you ever experienced a time when the requirements of your Christian faith seemed to conflict with a human need?
5. What should we do when a requirement of the faith seems to conflict with a human need?

Crowds Follow Jesus - Mark 3:7-12 Life Application Notes

3:7-8 While Jesus was drawing fire from the religious leaders, he was gaining great popularity among the people. Some were curious, some sought healing, some wanted evidence to use against him, and others wanted to know if Jesus truly was the Messiah. Most of them could only dimly guess at the real meaning of what was happening among them. Today crowds still follow Jesus, and they come for the same variety of reasons. What is your primary reason for following Jesus?

3:11 The evil spirits knew that Jesus was the Son of God, but they refused to turn from their evil purposes. Knowing about Jesus, or even believing that he is God's Son, does not guarantee salvation. You must also want to follow and obey him (see also James 2:17).

3:12 Jesus warned the evil spirits not to reveal his identity because he did not want them to reinforce a popular misconception. The huge crowds were looking for a political and military leader who would free them from Rome's control, and they thought that the Messiah predicted by the Old Testament prophets would be this kind of man. Jesus wanted to teach the people about the kind of Messiah he really was—one who was far different

from their expectations. Christ's kingdom is spiritual. It begins not with the overthrow of governments, but with the overthrow of sin in people's hearts.

Study Questions:

1. Why were the crowds so interested in following Jesus? (3:7-12)
2. What do the details of this story tell us about Jesus' priorities? (3:7-12)
3. What area of your life (physical, emotional, or spiritual) needs to be healed by Jesus?
4. How would it make a difference in your spiritual life if you had more confidence in Christ's power and authority?

The Appointing of the Twelve Apostles - Mark 3:13-19 Life Application Notes

3:14 From the hundreds of people who followed him from place to place, Jesus chose 12 to be his *apostles*. *Apostle* means messenger or authorized representative. He did not choose these 12 to be his associates and companions because of their faith; their faith often faltered. He didn't choose them because of their talent and ability; no one stood out with unusual ability. The disciples represented a wide range of backgrounds and life experiences, but apparently they had no more leadership potential than those who were not chosen. The one characteristic they all shared was their willingness to obey Jesus. After Jesus' ascension, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered to carry out special roles in the growth of the early church. We should not disqualify ourselves from service to Christ because we do not have the expected credentials. Being a good disciple is simply a matter of following Jesus with a willing heart.

3:14-15 Why did Jesus choose 12 men? The number 12 corresponds to the 12 tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28), showing the continuity between the old religious system and the new one based on Jesus' message. Many people followed Jesus, but these 12 received the most intense training. We see the impact of these men throughout the rest of the New Testament.

3:18 The Zealots were Jewish nationalists who opposed the Roman occupation of Palestine.

Study Questions:

1. By what criteria do you choose your friends?
2. What is the setting of this story? (3:13)
3. What did Jesus expect of the men He designated apostles? (3:14-15)
4. What was unusual about some of the men Jesus chose? (3:16-19)
5. What difference does it make to you that Jesus chose imperfect people to share in His ministry?
6. From what other more mature believers can you learn?
7. What would be your first step toward learning from a more mature believer in your church?

Jesus and Beelzebub - Mark 3:20-30 Life Application Notes

3:21 With the crowds pressing in on him, Jesus didn't even take time to eat. Because of this, his friends and family came to take charge of him (Mark 3:31-32), thinking he had gone "over the edge" as a religious fanatic. They were concerned for him, but they missed the point of his ministry. Even those who were closest to Jesus were slow to understand who he was and what he had come to do.

3:22-27 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law could not deny the reality of Jesus' miracles and supernatural power. They refused to believe that his power was from God, however, because then they would have had to accept him as the Messiah. Their pride would not let them do that. So in an attempt to destroy Jesus' popularity among the people, the teachers of the law accused him of having power from Satan. Jesus' reply showed that their argument didn't make sense. (*Beelzebub* refers to Satan.)

3:27 Although God permits Satan to work in our world, God is still in control. Jesus, because he is God, has power over Satan; Jesus is able to drive out demons and end their terrible work in people's lives. One day Satan will be bound forever (Rev. 20:10).

3:28-29 Christians sometimes wonder if they have committed this sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Christians need not worry about this sin because this sin is attributing to the devil what is the work of the Holy Spirit. It reveals a heart-attitude of unbelief and unrepentance. Deliberate, ongoing rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit is blasphemy because it is rejecting God himself. The religious leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy,

but ironically they were the guilty ones when they looked Jesus in the face and accused him of being possessed by Satan.

Study Questions:

1. In your experience, when has faithfulness to a cause or person led to conflict with others?
2. What did Jesus' family think of Him? (3:21)
3. Besides Jesus' own family, who else found fault with Him? (3:22)
4. How did Jesus refute His opponents' accusation that He was possessed by the devil? (3:23-27)
5. Why is unity among Christians so important?
6. In what ways can you strengthen your local fellowship or church?
7. What is one step you can take this week to strengthen the unity of your local church?

Jesus' Mother and Brothers - Mark 3:31-35 Life Application Notes

3:31-35 Jesus' mother was Mary (Luke 1:30-31), and his brothers were probably the other children Mary and Joseph had after Jesus (see also Mark 6:3). Some Christians believe the ancient tradition that Jesus was Mary's only child. If this is true, the "brothers" were possibly cousins (cousins were often called brothers in those days). Some have offered yet another suggestion: when Joseph married Mary, he was a widower, and these were his children by his first marriage. Most likely, these were Jesus' half brothers (see Mark 6:3-4).

Jesus' family did not yet fully understand his ministry, as can be seen in verse 21. Jesus explained that in our spiritual family, the relationships are ultimately more important and longer lasting than those formed in our physical families.

3:33-35 God's family is accepting and doesn't exclude anyone. Although Jesus cared for his mother and brothers, he also cared for all those who loved him. Jesus did not show partiality; he allowed everyone the privilege of obeying God and becoming part of his family. In our increasingly computerized, impersonal world, warm relationships among members of God's family take on major importance. The church can give the loving, personalized care that many people find nowhere else.

Study Questions:

1. What is one of your favorite childhood memories of your mother?
2. Who wanted to see Jesus? Why? (3:31-32)
3. What rhetorical question did Jesus ask? Why? (3:33)
4. How did Jesus respond to the request by His mother and brothers? (3:33-34)
5. In what way does doing God's will make a person Christ's brother or sister?
6. Why is it important for us to place even our families under the rule and place of Christ?
7. What could you do or say to help your family understand your faith in Christ?

Bible Memory Verses: Then He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Mark 2:27