

LEADER'S DISCUSSION GUIDE - MARK 1:1 – 15

The Kingdom Is Here

BIG IDEA

The good news begins with preparation: God prepares the way for the King and calls us to prepare our hearts to receive His kingdom through repentance, belief, and allegiance to Jesus.

SUGGESTED FLOW FOR A 75-MINUTE DISCUSSION

Section	Focus	Time
Read and observe	Observing content and structure	10 min
Mark 1:1	Title	10 min
Mark 1:2–3	Scripture prepares the way	10 min
Mark 1:4–8	John prepares the people	10 min
Mark 1:9–13	Jesus is identified and prepared	10 min
Mark 1:14–15	Jesus announces the kingdom	10 min
Summary and response	Preparation, repentance, belief, allegiance	15 min

A Note for Leaders

The questions and timings are suggestions. Select the questions that will best serve your group, allow time for participants to observe the text, and do not feel pressure to cover every point. The ideas are provided to guide the conversation, not as a script that must be taught.

READ AND OBSERVE

Read the passage aloud. Then give the group a few moments to observe the text:

- Look for key elements such as who, what, when, and where, as well as repeated words, contrasts, quotations, and patterns.
- Divide the passage into thought units.
- Note anything unexpected. What questions does the passage raise?

Invite the group to share their initial observations from the text.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND LEADER HELPS

1. Title – Mark 1:1

The title of the whole book: The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Ask: If this is the title of Mark's Gospel, what should we expect from our study together?

Possible follow-ups:

- What do the important terms in this title mean: beginning, gospel, Christ, and Son of God?
- How should this opening declaration shape the way we read the rest of Mark?

Ideas We Hope to Hear and Discover:

- This opening verse functions as the title of Mark's Gospel and introduces its central focus: the gospel of Jesus. This is both the good news proclaimed by Jesus and the good news about who Jesus is.
- Gospel means "good news" and was commonly used to announce victory or the arrival of a ruler. Mark is announcing God's decisive victory and the arrival of His kingdom through Jesus.
- Beginning echoes the opening of Genesis. Mark presents Jesus' ministry as the beginning of God's new work of creation and the restoration of His kingdom—a work that continues through Christ's Spirit-filled followers.
- Jesus is the Christ and Son of God—the promised, anointed King in the line of David, God's unique Son, true representative, and rightful ruler. Through Jesus' actions, teaching, suffering, and death, Mark will reveal what kind of King He is, what kind of kingdom He brings, and why His coming is genuinely good news.

2. Scripture Prepares the Way — Mark 1:2–3

God prepares the way through His prophets for the coming of the Messiah, who will lead a new Exodus.

Ask: Why does Mark begin with these Old Testament passages, and how do they prepare us for what follows?

Possible follow-ups:

- What did these passages mean in their original contexts? (Look them up.) How does this help us understand how Mark is using them?
- Who is preparing the way, and for whom?
- What is significant about the wilderness, the messenger, and the way being prepared?

Ideas We Hope to Hear and Discover:

- Mark begins with a carefully woven collection of passages from the Law and the Prophets. In their original settings, these texts speak of God sending servants to prepare and lead His people and of God Himself coming to meet them.
- These passages share the Exodus as a central theme. The wilderness recalls the place where God previously rescued, tested, and led Israel, while Isaiah anticipates another saving act of

God. Mark presents Jesus as leading a new and greater Exodus into the life of God's kingdom.

- John is the promised, Elijah-like messenger who prepares the people for the Lord's coming. Jesus is the Lord and King whose way John prepares. Words that referred to God in their original contexts are now applied to Jesus, revealing the importance of His identity.
- By beginning with Scripture, Mark roots the gospel of Jesus in God's saving work and promises to Israel. Jesus is not an afterthought or a departure from Israel's story, but its fulfillment—the one toward whom the whole story has been moving.

3. John Prepares the People — Mark 1:4–8

John prepares the way for Jesus by calling the people to repentance and proclaiming the coming One.

Ask: How does John prepare people for Jesus and the coming of God's kingdom?

Possible follow-ups:

- How does John fulfill the prophecies quoted by Mark?
- What do baptism and repentance communicate?
- Why are the Jordan and wilderness significant?
- Why does Mark describe John's clothing?
- Why did so many people respond?
- What was John's message, and what would it have meant to his hearers?

Ideas We Hope to Hear and Discover:

- John prepares the people through a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. His message is radical: God's covenant people themselves need full cleansing, renewal, and a completely fresh beginning with God. Their baptism publicly expresses a decisive turning back to God and readiness to receive His forgiveness and coming work.
- The Jordan and the wilderness recall Israel's Exodus and entry into the promised land. By returning there, the people acknowledge that they remain in a kind of spiritual wilderness and need God to lead them into His promised future.
- John's clothing identifies him as an Elijah-like messenger preparing the way for the Day of the Lord. His simple life also reflects complete devotion to God and dependence on His provision rather than religious status or power.
- John points beyond himself to the stronger One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. John's baptism prepares the people for what is coming, but the coming One will bring the deeper transformation promised in the new covenant—new hearts, faithful obedience, and life with God in His renewed kingdom.

4. Jesus Is Identified and Prepared — Mark 1:9–13

Through His baptism and Spirit-led time in the wilderness, Jesus is identified and prepared for His ministry.

Ask: What do Jesus' baptism and time in the wilderness reveal about His identity and mission?

Possible follow-ups:

- Though Mark does not tell us why Jesus is baptized, what might be the significance of His participating in this?

- What is the significance of the heavens being torn open and the coming of the Spirit like a dove?
- What do the Father's words reveal? What Old Testament passages stand behind those words?
- What does the wilderness testing show about Jesus? Why might the Spirit drive Him into this?

Ideas We Hope to Hear and Discover:

- By submitting to John's baptism, Jesus identifies with the people He has come to redeem and aligns Himself with God's saving work. His baptism marks the beginning of His public ministry as God's anointed Messiah, empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- The tearing open of the heavens answers Isaiah's prayer that God would come down to His people. God's kingdom and saving presence are breaking into the world through Jesus—an image Mark will echo when the temple veil is torn at Jesus' death.
- The Spirit descending like a dove evokes peace and new creation. Empowered by the Spirit, Jesus begins God's work of restoration and forgiveness and is prepared to proclaim and demonstrate the arrival of God's kingdom.
- The Father's words draw together Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42, revealing Jesus as both God's chosen King and faithful suffering servant. His baptism functions as a coronation and commissioning: His identity, authority, and mission come from God Himself.
- The Spirit then drives Jesus into the wilderness, where He remains faithful under testing and succeeds where Adam and Israel failed. Having confronted Satan, Jesus emerges prepared to lead God's people in a new Exodus out of the wilderness and into the life of God's kingdom.

5. Jesus Announces the Kingdom — Mark 1:14–15

Jesus' ministry begins with the announcement that the kingdom is here. Our response to this good news is repentance and belief.

Ask: What is the good news Jesus announces, and what response does it require?

Possible follow-ups:

- How does Jesus' message compare with John's?
- What does it mean that the time is fulfilled?
- What is the kingdom of God? Why is it such good news that it has drawn near?
- How are repentance and belief connected to this message?

Ideas We Hope to Hear and Discover:

- John pointed forward to the One who was coming; Jesus now declares that the decisive moment has arrived.
- The kingdom of God refers to God's active reign—His wise, authoritative, and life-giving rule. Sin disrupted humanity's life under this reign, but Jesus announces that God is acting through Him to restore what was lost.
- The arrival of God's kingdom requires repentance and belief. Repentance means turning from old allegiances and patterns of life, while belief means trusting submission to God and His purposes. The kingdom is received through a willing turning and trusting response.
- These verses summarize the message of Jesus and prepare us for the rest of Mark. Everything that follows will reveal what God's kingdom looks like, how it comes through Jesus, and what it means to live in repentance and faith.

SUMMARY AND RESPONSE

Ask:

- What are the key themes of the text? How do we see the theme of preparation?
- What have we learned about Jesus, the gospel, and God's kingdom? What is the proper response to this message?
- What should we now expect from the rest of Mark?

Ideas We Hope to Hear and Discover:

- Mark announces the beginning of a new era: God's promised Messiah and King has come. Through Jesus, God is fulfilling Israel's Scriptures and beginning a new Exodus and a new work of creation.
- Preparation shapes the whole passage. The prophets announce the Lord's coming, John prepares the people through repentance, and God prepares His Son through the Father's affirmation, the Spirit's anointing, and testing in the wilderness.
- Jesus stands at the center as God's anointed King and beloved Son. He comes to inaugurate God's kingdom and give the Holy Spirit promised in the new covenant.
- Jesus announces that the time has come and God's kingdom has drawn near. The proper response is repentance and belief—turning from old allegiances, trusting God's saving work, and giving our allegiance to Jesus.
- This is genuinely good news: through Jesus, people can receive forgiveness, new life, and restored fellowship with God. These themes of fulfillment, preparation, kingdom, and response provide the foundation for everything that follows in Mark.

Application

- This passage focuses on the preparation for Jesus' ministry. How is God preparing you for His work and message—through His Word, times of repentance, wilderness experiences, or other means? How can you be more attentive and responsive to God's preparation in your life?
- Why is the kingdom of God good news to you personally? In what practical ways can you live out repentance and belief in your daily life?
- This passage marks the beginning of Jesus' gospel. How has Jesus' gospel transformed your life? How can you trust and respond to it daily? How might you invite others to encounter this good news?

Conclude by praying together in response to what God has revealed through His Word.