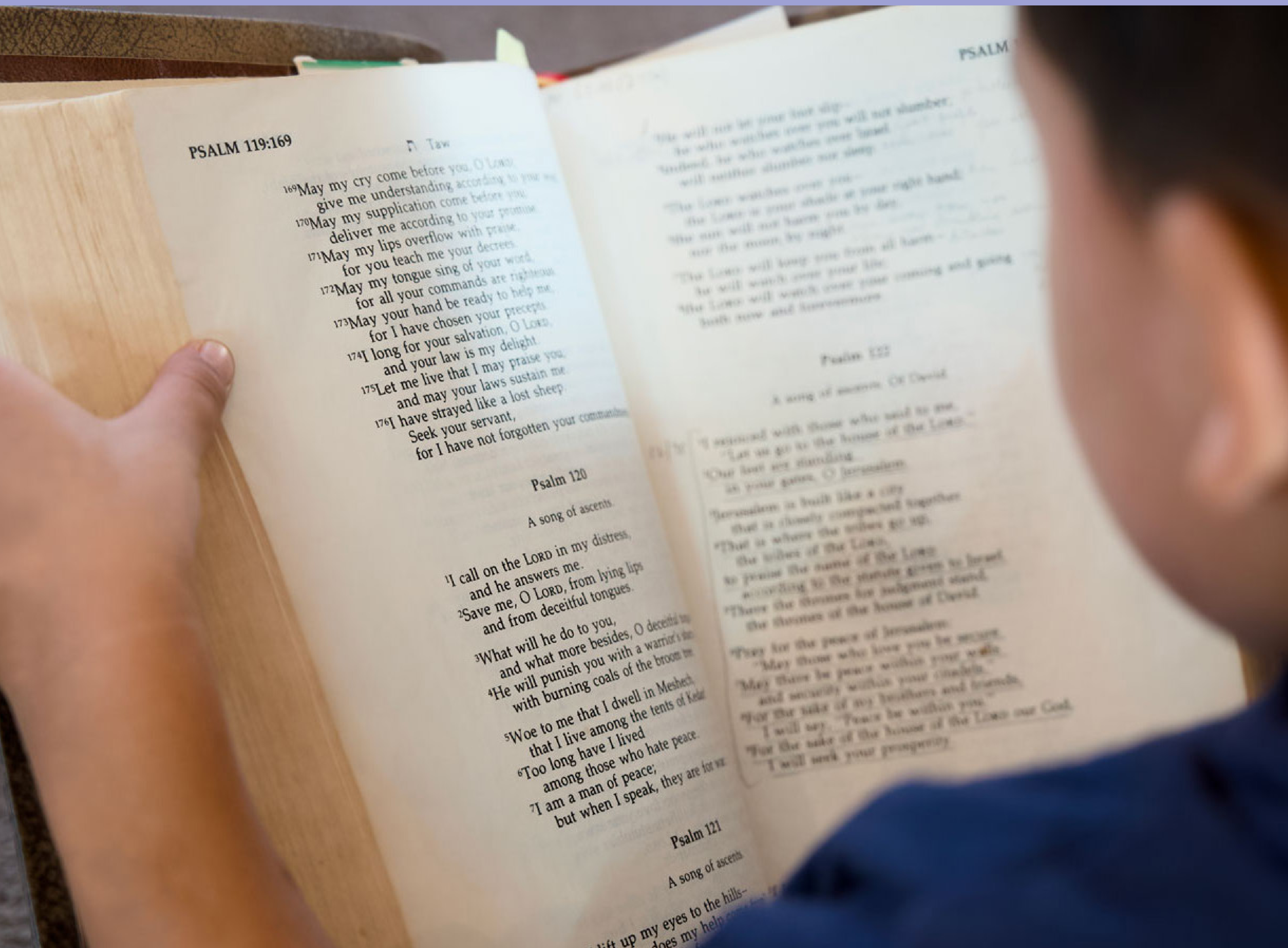




Into the Bible

The purpose of into the Bible
is to get children into the Bible,
and to get the Bible into children.

STEP TWO: MARK 1



Contents



mi-pham@unsplash

GENERAL INTRODUCTION 3

MARK 1

The Bible for Children 6

Introduction for Beginners 11

Bible Study for the Young 18

INDEX 43

General Introduction



INTO THE BIBLE is a way to help children and young people, and anyone for that matter, to understand the Bible better. It's a simple translation from the original languages of the Bible, together with explanations, to make the Bible more clear.

Each Step INTO THE BIBLE is made up of three parts:

- 1) A **translation**, so that children can understand the passage in order to be able to read it in their own Bible.
- 2) An **introduction** to the passage for Beginners, so that they can get to know the background to the passage they are reading. This includes the history, geography, the issues of the time, and people involved, the culture, etc.
- 3) A **Bible study** on the passage for young people, or for parents, or teachers to help them grasp what the point of each paragraph is, and what are the issues spoken about in the text .

For five years in my ministry God put me in a government high school where I **discovered how interested children were in understanding a passage of the Scriptures**. Class after class, year after year there was sustained interest and even excitement. Among thousands of learners, I never had a class not interested.

During that time three of our four school-going children died. They died of extremely rare diseases that strike once in several million cases, and all three cases were entirely different from one another.

These two factors, teaching at the high school, and at the same time losing our children, are where the idea of INTO THE BIBLE came from.

The method of INTO THE BIBLE is to consult the Hebrew or Greek lexicons (dictionaries) to find out what meaning of the Hebrew/Greek word best fits the context of the passage, and will also make clear sense to a young reader. Where a word is difficult to understand I may turn it into a sentence to make sense of it. Where an issue is rather complicated, I use a footnote to explain it.

Hebrew and Greek lexicons open up the meanings of words and phrases in such a way that one sees more clearly what the Bible is saying. My aim is to share this information with children, with people who are beginning to read their Bibles, and with anyone who wants to teach children or adults, or those who simply want to get to know the Bible better.

The main principle on which INTO THE BIBLE is based is that the Bible comes from God, and it leads us to God, and that the whole Bible is true, and is perfectly reliable. The Bible is what we need to get through life, and to face death. The Bible has God's authority and goodness behind it.

Therefore, it is vital that everyone can understand their Bible.

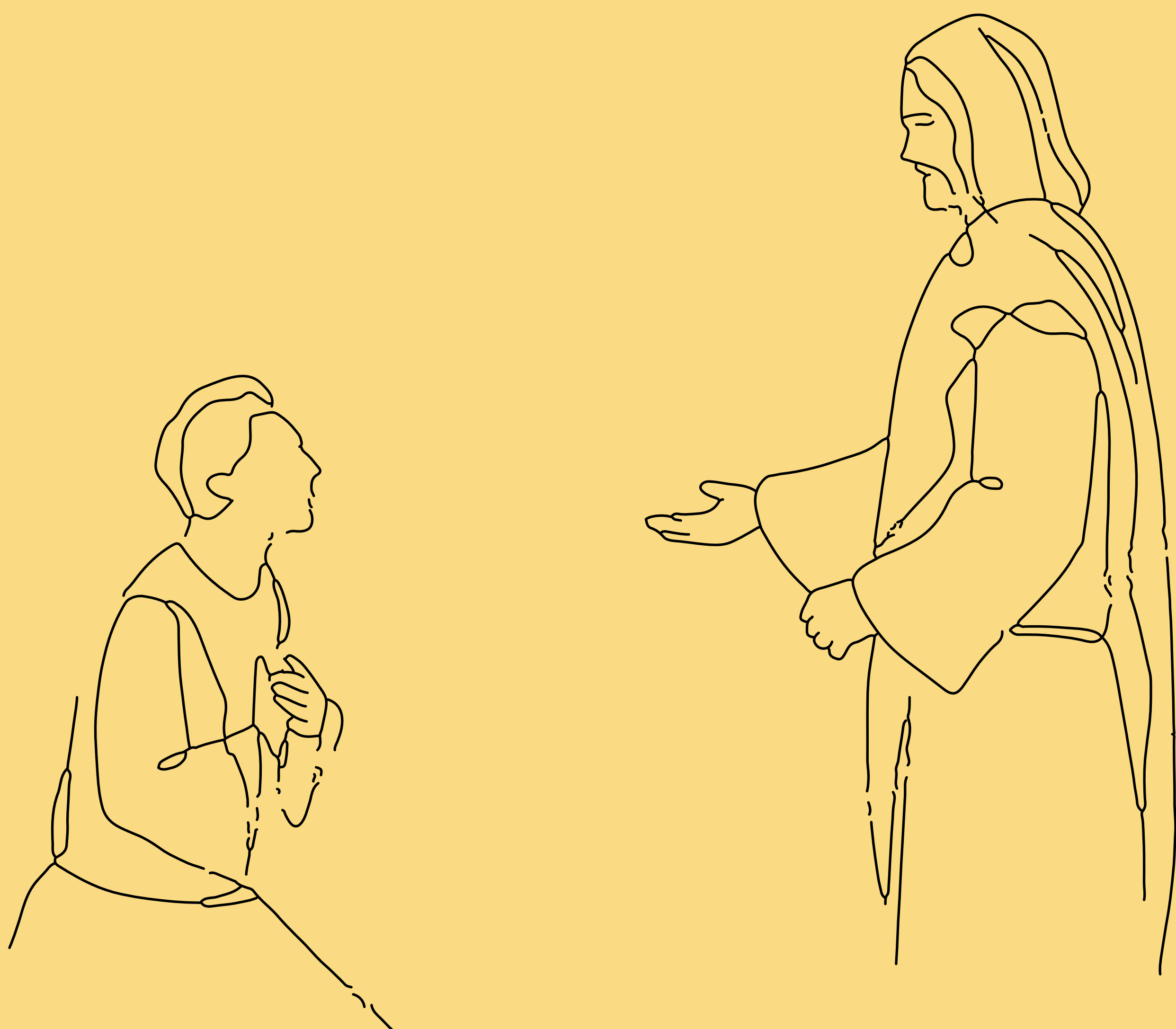
- INTO THE BIBLE is intended to prepare youngsters to be able to **read their own Bible.**
- INTO THE BIBLE is planned to **introduce children to most of the Bible.**
- INTO THE BIBLE is **educational.** It is meant to develop their **reading skills as well as their characters.** It can also be used by parents or teachers to teach their children. **The focus is on our children.**

Our children are our heritage from God, and the Bible is the heritage for our children, which is also from God. The purpose of Into the Bible is to get children into the Bible, and to get the Bible into children.

Yours in Christ,

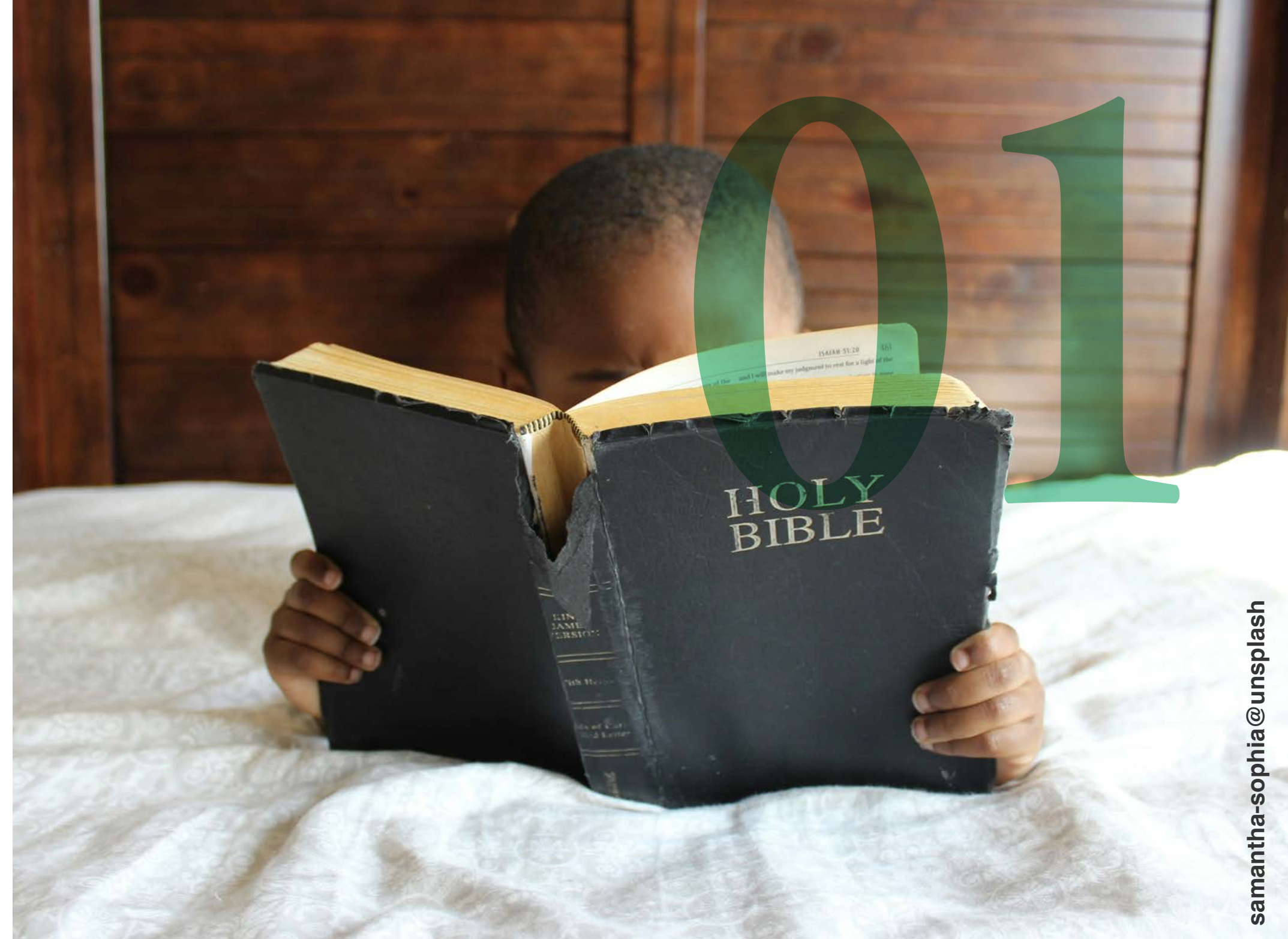
Peter Watson

Mark 1



Mark 1

A Simple Bible Translation



START HERE!

Read this simple translation to understand the passage, then read it in your own Bible.



1: 1-5 THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

This is the beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, as it has been written in Isaiah the prophet:

Look, I am going to send my special messenger to introduce the Messiah. He will prepare people for the Messiah. (Malachi 3)

The voice of this special messenger will call out in the wilderness where very few people live. He will preach that you must prepare yourselves for the coming of the Messiah. Get your lives straightened out so that you can welcome him. (Isaiah 40)

That's exactly how John came. He was a special messenger from God. His coming was the beginning of the gospel. John the Baptist was baptising people in the wilderness, and preaching that they should be sorry for their sins and repent, and then be baptised. They must do this in order to get God's forgiveness for their sins.

All the Jews in the whole country of Judah went out into the desert wilderness to get baptised by John. So did all the people who were living in Jerusalem. They openly admitted their sins, and so were baptised by him in the Jordan River.

1:6-8 JOHN THE BAPTIST

John was different from other religious leaders. They lived well. They dressed to look good, and they enjoyed the best kind of food. Today that would be like eating out in expensive restaurants. But John wore rough, tough clothing, made from the thick, hard hair of camels. He wore a leather belt, because he dressed for action, not for show.

He just ate whatever he could find in the desert, so he lived on locusts and the honey of wild bees.

The important thing about John was what he told the people. He said: Someone is coming soon who is much more powerful than I am, and much more useful to you. I'm not good enough even to take off his sandals, as a junior servant does.

I'm just baptising you with water. But he will do something much greater: He will baptise you with God's Holy Spirit.

1:9-11 JESUS IS ALSO BAPTISED BY JOHN

Then something especially important happened in those days when John was baptising people. Jesus, who was from Nazareth in Galilee, came there. He was also baptised in the Jordan River by John.

Then, straight after that, as Jesus was getting up out of the water, he saw heaven being ripped open. He saw the Spirit of God, looking like a dove, coming down and onto him.

Then there came a voice out of heaven: You are my Son whom I love so much. I am very, very pleased with you!

1:12-13 JESUS IS TEMPTED BY SATAN

Straight after being baptised, the Holy Spirit made Jesus go out into the desert.

He was in the desert a long time, for forty days. During this time he was challenged and tempted by Satan, the devil, who put him under great pressure and strain. He was also surrounded by wild animals that were dangerous. But angels looked after him.

1:14-15 JESUS BEGINS TO PREACH

After John was arrested and put to death, Jesus came into Galilee. There he announced the gospel, the good news of God.

He told the people that the time the prophets had predicted had now come. Jesus said: The kingdom of God is near. It is now here, just as the prophets predicted. So you must repent and change the way you live. You must believe the gospel.

1:16-18 JESUS CALLS SIMON AND ANDREW

As Jesus was walking next to the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing their nets into the sea. They were fishermen.

Jesus said to Simon and Andrew: Come with me! I'm going to train you to work for God. Instead of fishing for fish, you will fish for people.

They immediately left their nets, and went off with Jesus.

1:19-20 JESUS CALLS JAMES AND JOHN

Going a bit further, Jesus saw James and his brother John. They were the sons of Zebedee [ze-b'dee], and were busy mending their fishing nets.

Jesus then called them as well. James and John left their father Zebedee in the boat, with the fishermen who worked for him, and they went off with Jesus.

1:21-26 JESUS CHASES A DEMON OUT OF A MAN

Jesus and his followers went into the town of Capernaum [k'per-nee-im]. When it was the Sabbath day Jesus went straightaway to the synagogue, where he started to teach.

The believers were utterly amazed at Jesus' teaching, because he spoke as though he knew all about God, and could explain clearly what God wanted us to know and to do. He taught with authority. He spoke the truth. Their usual teachers were quite different. Although they had been trained in God's laws, they were sometimes unsure about exactly what God wanted. Often they did not understand the Bible well enough to make it really clear to people. They were not reliable teachers.

Suddenly, during their worship in the synagogue, a man with a demon in him shouted out at Jesus:

Leave us alone, Jesus of Nazareth! Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: You are the Holy One who has come from God!

But Jesus got angry and rebuked the demon. He said: Stop it! Be quiet! Come out of this man!

The demon caused the man to shake violently, but then with a loud shriek it came out of him.

1:27-28 PEOPLE ARE AMAZED AT JESUS' TEACHING

All the people there were stunned, and even frightened. It caused them to do a lot of talking with one another about what had happened. They said: What is this? It's a new kind of teaching, with amazing authority. He can even tell demons what to do, and they have to obey him.

News about what Jesus had done straightaway spread in all directions through the whole area of Galilee.

1:29-31 JESUS HEALS PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Straight after this Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue, and they went to the home of Peter and Andrew. James and John were with them.

Now the mother of Peter's wife was sick. She was lying in bed, helpless, with a fever. As soon as Jesus got there, they told him about her.

Jesus went to her, and he got her up just by taking her hand. Immediately her high temperature left her and she was completely better. She even got busy serving a meal for them.

1:32-34 JESUS HEALS MANY PEOPLE

Then evening came. For the Jews, this was the end of the Sabbath day. So when the sun set people started bringing all those who were sick to Jesus. They also brought people who had demons in them.

The whole town was gathered together at the door of Peter's home.

Jesus then healed many sick people who had all kinds of illnesses and diseases. He also chased away many demons. He never allowed the demons to say anything, because they knew him.

1:35-39 JESUS PRAYS AND MOVES ON

Very early the next morning, while it was still dark, Jesus left the house and went away to a lonely place. There he prayed.

But Peter, and some friends with him, tracked him down.

They found Jesus, and said to him: All the people are looking for you.

But Jesus said to them: Let's go off somewhere else, to the other villages and towns around here, so that I can also preach there. That's the reason why I've come away.

So Jesus went around preaching in their synagogues throughout the whole of Galilee. He also chased demons out of people who suffered from them.

1:40-45 JESUS HEALS A MAN WHO HAD LEPROSY

A man with leprosy came to Jesus begging him for help. He went on pleading with Jesus. He would even go down on his knees in front of him. He kept on pleading, saying: If you want to you are able to make me well.

Although Jesus got cross with the man, he reached out his hand and touched him. No one had ever touched him since he had caught this dreadful disease. Then Jesus said to him: Yes, I DO want to help you! So, get well.

Straightaway the leprosy left him, and his skin became completely healthy and normal.

But Jesus sent him away immediately with a strict warning and a clear order:

He said to him: Make sure that you do not say anything to anyone, but go straight to the priest and show him your skin. Then give thanks to God for your healing, the way the Bible says. Now off you go, straightaway, and see that you do as you are told!

But instead of doing what Jesus had told him to do, the man went away and started to do a lot of talking. He went around telling everyone everywhere what had happened to him. The result was that Jesus was no longer able to go freely into any town without creating a lot of excitement. He now had to stay out in the empty desert countryside. Yet people still came to him from everywhere.



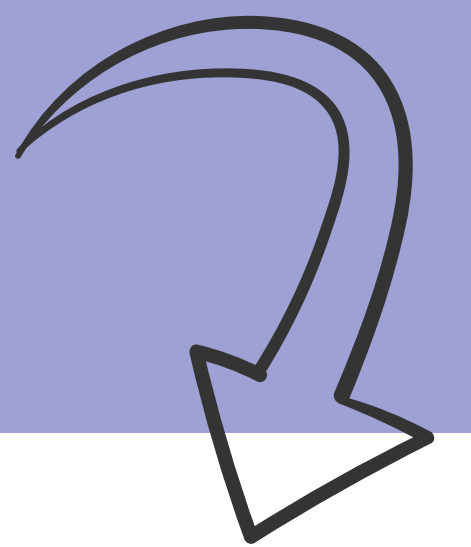
NOW YOU CAN READ MARK 1 IN YOUR OWN BIBLE.

Mark 1

Passage background & introduction



Read this part to get to know the background of the chapter you read in Section 01. Interesting things like who Mark was, and what he did, and why he decided to write this gospel. Mark tells how Jesus began his work and his teaching.



Mark was a young man in the time of Jesus. It is likely that he actually knew Jesus. It is quite possible that he was with the disciples when Jesus was arrested. He narrowly escaped being arrested himself. This idea is based on the fact that Mark says that there was a young man present when Jesus was arrested. When all the disciples ran away into the darkness, so did the young man. In the process he lost the cloak he was wearing and escaped in just his underwear. We cannot think of why Mark should mention this unless he was actually the young man.

Mark's mother's name was Mary. She was an important lady who was well-off. Mary was a keen believer in Jesus. She used her home for believers to meet there and to pray. It seems that the earliest group of Christians in Jerusalem used her home as their house-church.

Later on Mark left Jerusalem and joined Paul in Antioch [anti-ock]. Antioch was far to the north of Galilee, on the river Orontes [or-ron-teez], not far from the sea. It was in North West Syria, but nowadays it is just inside the southern border of Turkiye. That was where believers, Jews and Gentiles, were first called Christians. There was a strong community of Christians there, and Barnabas [barn-a-bis] and Paul were two of their leaders. Barnabas was a cousin of Mary, Mark's mother. The church at Antioch decided to send Barnabas and Paul on a mission to spread Christianity further to the west. Mark joined them although he was much younger than they. They went to the island of Cyprus [sigh-pris], and travelled across it, preaching about Jesus to the people. But when Paul and Barnabas decided to go from there into Turkiye, Mark became

uneasy. We don't know why. At their first stop in Turkiye he decided to leave the other two older men and go back home to Jerusalem for a while. He did not complete the first missionary journey with the other two. But later on he went back to Antioch.

The first missionary journey was so successful that Paul and Barnabas decided to go on a second missionary journey into Turkiye. Barnabas wanted to take his cousin Mark with them. Paul disagreed. Mark had already left them once. As a result of their disagreement Barnabas and Paul ended their teamwork. So Barnabas and Mark went back to Cyprus while Paul went to Turkiye. Paul took with him a man called Titus [tigh-tis]. Years later Paul wrote a letter to Titus and it became part of the New Testament. The book Titus comes after the two letters to Timothy, also written by Paul.

For many years after that we know nothing about Mark. Then we discover that he went to live and work in Rome. His Hebrew name was John and his Roman or Latin name was Marcus [mar-kis].

He became a close and trusted friend of both Paul and Peter. Peter stayed in Rome and preached there. He taught Mark what he knew about Jesus. Peter had known Jesus very well. Wherever he went he told people about what he knew of the Lord. He was the chief Christian apostle. Mark had the best possible teaching about Jesus.

Toward the end of Paul's life he was in prison in Rome. But he taught Mark how to think about the Christian gospel, and how to explain it to the Romans. Paul was the rabbi that Jesus chose to explain the gospel to the rest of the world, the Gentiles, and especially to the Romans. Paul was the greatest expert in the world on how we are all to understand what Jesus Christ has done for the whole of mankind.

So Mark also had the best possible teaching about Christianity from Paul. What with Peter and Paul's training Mark became a first class teacher of the gospel.

When Peter was killed Mark realised that Christianity faced a problem. Soon there would be no one alive who actually knew Jesus and was taught by him. Paul was also killed not long after Peter. This was nearly forty years after Jesus had gone back to heaven. Mark would now be in his sixties. So Mark came to two huge decisions.

Mark decided that what he had learnt about Jesus must be written down. Otherwise some of it was going to get lost in time. At that stage all that had been written were letters to Christian churches and some individuals. Most of these letters were by Paul.

Paul was the greatest expert in the world on how we are all to understand what Jesus Christ has done for the whole of mankind.

Peter had also written some letters. But no one had written about the life of Jesus. And that is what Peter had been preaching about. Peter had concentrated his teaching about Jesus from the time of his baptism until his resurrection from the dead. This was from the beginning of Jesus' ministry to the end of his time on earth as a man.

Mark's great concern was that this information must be written accurately. He wanted the news about Jesus to be true and reliable. If one says what is not true, it will be found out sooner or later. It cannot last, and it won't help anyone.

**But truth will last,
and the truth will help people.**

Mark decided to write down what he had learnt about Jesus from **the Apostle Peter**.

The other huge decision Mark took was particularly important. Mark decided not to write a story or biography of Jesus' life. He decided to write what Jesus' life was about, and what it means for us. This was what he had learnt from the Apostle Paul. Paul had helped him to understand what Jesus meant to the world. So Mark invented something that the world had never seen before. He called it "a gospel", **the gospel of Jesus Christ**.

**This gospel would explain
what Jesus was like and what he did,
and how that is good news for all people.**

**What Mark wanted us to know is that
Jesus is the Messiah,
the Son of God,
the Saviour of the world.**

**What Mark tells us is designed
to get us to believe this.**

Mark also had another purpose. The world, especially in Rome, had suddenly become a crazy, awful place, and most dangerous. Peter did not just die: he had been murdered, or executed. He was put to death by the Roman government. Paul, who had been in prison, was also executed by the government. Lots of Christians were being arrested and put to death in all sorts of cruel and barbaric ways. This had all come about suddenly and most unexpectedly.

When Peter and Paul and Mark were in Rome, the Roman emperor was a man called Nero [near-roh]. Nero ruled the world. But he was something of an artist and an actor. He was also a bit of a dreamer with some fantastic ideas. His real enemies were the wealthy and important people in Rome. For the first five years of his government things went fairly well. Then a fire broke out in Rome. No one is sure how it was started. But it became a massive fire. It burned for a week without anything being able to stop it. When the fires looked as though they were dying down they flared up again. A quarter of the city was completely destroyed. Three quarters of the city was badly damaged, especially the older buildings. This caused an immense amount of suffering to the citizens of Rome.

Nero did what he could to help his people. He reduced the taxes to help people to survive and rebuild their homes. He ordered the price of food to be lowered so that people would not starve. He got the government to rebuild parts of the city and make those parts better than they had been before. He got rid of crowded slums where people had lived in pathetic poverty. But what he could not do anything about was the anger of the people. Both the rich and the poor turned against him.

The people believed that the fires had been deliberately started, and that the person responsible for this was Nero. They thought that Nero had burnt old and shabby Rome down so that he could build a new and better Rome, and make it world famous. So they rioted. They went berserk. They fought against the authorities and even attacked them when they tried to put out the fires. In fact, criminals even threw fire-bombs into buildings to make things worse. The Emperor

Nero panicked. All he could think of was to put the blame on others so that people would stop blaming him. He decided to blame the Christians.

Christians were not popular in Rome. Rome, the capital city of the world, was where many people of all sorts came to live. The rich or super-rich and the poor had one thing in common: they misbehaved. Rome was a very sinful place to be. Christians, with their ideas of living a decent and clean life, were a nuisance and a pain to most people. People don't like to be told how to live. They resent being told that what they are doing is wrong or bad.

Christians also refused to worship the popular idols. They would not worship even the Emperor. They stayed away from feasts that became wild parties. They would not attend the games where people killed one another or fought wild animals. All this made

Christians were not popular in Rome. Rome, the capital city of the world, was where many people of all sorts came to live.

them unpopular with the public. They were regarded as a nuisance who thought that they were better than everybody else. People did not like Christians.

So it was easy for Nero to blame the Christians. Christians were arrested. People who admitted that they were Christians were the first to be caught. They were then forced to tell the authorities who the other Christians were. Mass arrests followed. Christians were tortured in terrible ways. Many lost their lives. Christians had to go underground. Underneath Rome there were tunnels that had been dug through the rocks. That was where the Romans buried their dead. The Christians went into these catacombs [cata-kooms] to hide from the authorities and to worship God. Life became very difficult and dangerous for them.

Mark decided to tell these poor, suffering Christians what he had learnt from Peter and Paul about Jesus. Mark used the same sort of Greek language that ordinary Romans used when they talked. It was called common or simple Greek. He did not try to write in the classical Greek that the famous and clever Greek writers used, which was popular with the more educated Greeks and Romans. Mark wrote for ordinary people. He wrote the way most people talked. He wrote the way anyone would have written if there had been newspapers or news media or magazines in those days. He wrote in the Greek language because everyone could read and speak Greek in those times. In our Bible we have translated what Mark wrote into our own language, such as English.

He has made it possible for us to overcome sin and suffering, and get to heaven.

Mark says that Jesus was someone who had also suffered. He had been persecuted by the authorities. He had been betrayed by one of his friends. He had been falsely accused by his own people. He had been cruelly killed by order of Roman authorities. He had even warned his people that there was going to be terrible persecution and suffering.

But the gospel was that God had been with Jesus. Jesus had remained true to God. Jesus had won in the end. He had even conquered death. Jesus has taught us how to find God and how to please him. He has made it possible for us to overcome sin and suffering, and get to heaven. Mark wanted to help the Christians in Rome, and elsewhere, to know how to turn to God to get his help and comfort and the strength to keep going.

The Gospel means that we all find God through Jesus Christ the Son of God.

One of the most unfortunate things that had happened during this time of persecution was that some Christians tried to get out of being tortured and killed by denying that they were Christians. They broke away from the church. When the persecutions ended, they wanted to rejoin the church. Some of the leaders in the church who had been persecuted would not allow this. They said that because these people had denied Jesus they were no longer welcome in the church. This was a crushing blow for the Christians who had repented for letting the Lord down.

So Mark decided to tell people about what Peter had done in the night that Jesus was arrested. Peter had not done well, and he had told Mark about this. He had even preached to people about his failure. When Jesus had asked him to watch with him while he prayed, just before he was arrested, Peter had fallen asleep. When Jesus was arrested Peter had sworn that he did not know who Jesus was. He claimed that he knew nothing about that fellow Jesus. He denied knowing him three times. He even started swearing, protesting in the strongest terms that he was no friend of the man Jesus. He said this to save himself from also being arrested.

But later on Peter, the leader of the apostles, had deeply regretted what he had done, and Jesus had forgiven him. Jesus had not only forgiven Peter but had told him to continue doing the work that Jesus had been doing.

It is possible that because Mark wrote about Peter's failure he might have felt a bit uncomfortable for telling us about Peter's poor performance. That may be why he decided to put that bit in about how he had also run away from danger when Jesus was arrested. He had even lost his clothing. It had been a very embarrassing event. Believers in Jesus suffer not only pain and loss but also embarrassment and helplessness. Jesus himself suffered these things.

Jesus had not only forgiven Peter but had told him to continue doing the work that Jesus had been doing.

Mark's new gospel was so successful that the Apostle Matthew decided to use the same method to tell the world what he had learnt about Jesus, and what Jesus means to us. Matthew was a Jew and he wanted to explain to his fellow Jews that Jesus was the Messiah that God had promised his people since the time of Abraham, Moses and David. Matthew had been one of Jesus' twelve disciples for about three years, from the time Jesus began his work until his resurrection from the dead. So he knew Jesus well.

Another person who liked the idea of Mark's Gospel was a doctor called Luke. As a doctor Luke was a very careful writer. He interviewed many people who had known Jesus, and then faithfully recorded what he had found out. His gospel is highly

respected for its accuracy. He also decided to tell an important Roman friend of his about what he had discovered about the life of Jesus. Luke's gospel also tells us, who are not Jews, what Jesus means to us.

By the time the Apostle John came to write, many years later, the gospel was no longer a new idea. It was the normal way to tell people what Jesus had done, and what he had taught us to believe, and what he had commanded us to do. But the more popular the gospel became the more people there were that wanted to use the gospel to make money or become famous. These people changed parts of the gospel to make it easier for people to believe. John wrote his gospel to stop this kind of thing. John had been Jesus' closest friend.

**These four gospels became part of the Bible:
The Bible, throughout history,
is the most popular book the world has ever had,
and the gospels are the most popular part of the Bible.**

Mark wrote the shortest of the four gospels. Mark had the ability to write clearly and simply and briefly. Someone who lived about a hundred years later said that he had heard that Mark had short, stubby fingers. Whether or not that is true, Mark certainly had a gift for writing. He could say a lot in a few words. He was brilliant at explaining something so that people could understand.

**The two most important things
about GOD'S GOSPEL and THE BIBLE
are that it is the truth, and only the truth,
and that people understand it and believe it.**

Also, he was writing at a time when there was great danger for the Christians.

When there's danger or trouble, it's wise and helpful to say things briefly, and to stick to what is most important. What was most important to people who were suffering was that what Mark wrote was true and reliable.

It was a gospel of hope and encouragement.

It is quite likely that Mark was also eventually killed for being a Christian.

But before they got him,

Mark gave us this gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mark 1

A Bible study on our passage



Now let's grasp the points of each paragraph and the issues being spoken about and together we can grow in our knowledge and love of God.



1: 1-5 THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

This is ¹the beginning of the gospel about ²Jesus Christ, as it has been written in ³Isaiah the prophet: Look, I am going to send my special messenger to introduce ⁴the Messiah. He will prepare people for the Messiah. (Malachi 3)

The voice of this special messenger will call out in the wilderness where very few people live. He will preach that you must prepare yourselves for the coming of the Messiah. Get your lives straightened out so that you can welcome him. (Isaiah 40)

That's exactly how John came. He was a special messenger from God. His coming was the beginning of the gospel. John the Baptist was baptising people in the wilderness, and preaching that ⁵they should be sorry for their sins and ⁶repent, and then ⁷be baptised. They must do this in order to get ⁸God's forgiveness for their sins.

All the Jews in the whole country of Judah went out into the desert wilderness to get baptised by John. So did all the people who were living in Jerusalem. They openly admitted their sins, and so were baptised by him in ⁹the Jordan River.

¹In the beginning of the gospel: According to Mark, this is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Mark begins with John the Baptist preaching about Jesus.

Later on Matthew and Luke decided to tell us something about Jesus when he was born and when he was a young child. Finally, when John wrote his gospel, he also started with the time when John the Baptist preached about Jesus. All four gospels tell us about John the Baptist. His part in the gospel and the work of Jesus is very important.

- **John the Baptist made it clear that we must face up to the fact that we have sinned against God.**
- **He emphasised that we must believe in Jesus Christ to get rid of all those sins in our lives.**

That is basically what the gospel of Jesus Christ is about.

²**Jesus Christ:** In the early days many Christians wrote out copies of Mark's gospel. In those copies, experts or scholars have discovered some small mistakes. One type of mistake was when the person copying Mark's gospel, or copying a copy of Mark's gospel, added a few extra words that Mark had not written. Someone added the words, "the Son of God" to the name, Jesus Christ. These words were added because Jesus Christ **IS** the Son of God. This is true, although Mark did not write it here. But these extra words were so popular that they have remained in the Bible ever since.

However, Mark does write that Jesus is the Son of God six times elsewhere in his gospel.

³**Isaiah the prophet:** Mark starts his gospel about Jesus Christ by pointing to a prediction or **prophecy** by the prophets Malachi [mal-a-kigh] and Isaiah [igh-zigh-a]. Both prophets said that God was going to send the Messiah to his people. Although Mark is quoting both Malachi and Isaiah, to write briefly he mentions only the name of Isaiah, the older and better known prophet. So Mark includes Malachi's prophecy in Isaiah's prophecy. The first part of the prophecy is Malachi's, and the second part is Isaiah's.

John the Baptist emphasised that we must believe in Jesus Christ to get rid of all those sins in our lives.

Isaiah came nearly 300 years after King David. He lived in Jerusalem about 700 years before Christ and more than 100 years before the exile of the Jews.

Malachi lived 300 years after Isaiah. He lived and prophesied in the time of Nehemiah and Ezra [nee-a-migh-a & ez-ra], when the Jews came back to Jerusalem from their exile in Babylon. This was more than 400 years before Christ.

⁴**the Messiah**: God had promised his people in the Old Testament that he would one day send them the perfect leader. This leader would save us all from all our great troubles in life. He would be the saviour, the super-Saviour, not just for the Jews, but for the whole world. The Jews who believed this promise called him “The Messiah”, the man God would appoint to be the greatest and most important leader in their history. He would be even greater than King David or the Law-giver Moses or the father of the nation, Abraham.

⁵**they should be sorry for their sins**: What are **sins**?

Sin is doing what God has told us not to do. Sin is doing anything bad. It is doing what we should not do, that we shall later on wish we had not done. Sin is doing what is ugly or dirty. It is cheating, harming others and corrupting our soul. It is going against our conscience. Sin is what makes God get angry with us. Sin is disobeying God.

The reason why people would be sorry for their sins and regret what they had said or done was that they would be punished for their sins. They would suffer for having disobeyed God. Sin does not pay, just as crime does not pay. Sin causes trouble for those who sin. We cannot live comfortably with ourselves if our conscience turns against us. People think that sin is fun or clever, but it turns out in the end to be horrible and stupid.

Sin causes trouble for those who sin. We cannot live comfortably with ourselves if our conscience turns against us.

When we realise that sin is wrong and bad, the thing we want most is to get rid of it. Sinfulness results in being upset with oneself.

The only way we can get our sin cancelled is to get God’s forgiveness.

⁶**they should repent**: To repent means that if we have done what’s bad, we must face it and admit it, and put it right. Where it is impossible to put it right, we must learn the lesson from it. It must not happen again.

**To repent means to change,
to stop doing what is bad,
and to listen to God in future.**

⁷**baptism**: Baptism is a Greek word. It means to be washed or made clean. Being baptised is the sign the church uses to show us that God forgives our sin. We are baptised if we are sorry for what we have done and regret the way we have lived in the past. Regret means being unhappy and worried about whatever sins we have committed.

Baptism is asking God to help us to come right in life. We ask God to make us clean, so that we can change the way we have lived, and do better in the future.

Baptism is the sign that we want to go to heaven where everything is perfectly clean, and where everyone there is also clean and good.

Baptism means to believe in a pure God and in living a clean life.

⁸**God's forgiveness:** This is the most important thing that we can get from God in this life. Once God forgives us, we are no longer guilty, no matter what we have done, or how bad we have been. When God forgives us, it is permanent. It is forever. It also means that no one can ever criticise or blame us anymore. It even means that we don't have to keep blaming ourselves. Our conscience can be clear in future. Most important of all, if God has forgiven us, we can go to heaven.

Forgiveness means that what was wrong has been sorted out and put right. Forgiveness means that we have come right, and that God is now on our side. God's forgiveness allows us to live with a clear conscience, and not worry about being punished. We don't even have to worry about what others think or say about us, if we have repented.

Once God forgives us, we are no longer guilty, no matter what we have done, or how bad we have been.

⁹**the Jordan River:** From Jerusalem to the river

Jordan was a distance of about twenty miles (over 30 kilometres). The road was very steep since Jerusalem is about 4,000 feet (or 1,200 metres) higher than the Jordan River. For people to go down to the Jordan was a difficult journey. They had to walk down a long, steep dirt road. They then had to climb all the way back up the mountain. It was a big effort, and they had to go out of their way. It is very interesting that their reason for making this journey was just to get right with God. There were many people living in other parts of Judea who came to the Jordan from even greater and harder distances. What they needed was God's forgiveness, and John was the one person who preached with the authority of God. Most of the religious leaders of that time were too hypocritical to help people who suffered from a feeling of guilt and fear of God. By listening to John and being baptised by him these people found God and his forgiveness and peace and hope. They went home with joy in their hearts, despite the long, steep, hard uphill journey.

1:6-8 JOHN THE BAPTIST

John was different from other religious leaders. They lived well. They dressed to look good, and they enjoyed the best kind of food. Today that would be like eating out in expensive restaurants. But John wore rough, tough clothing, made from the thick, hard hair of camels. ¹He wore a leather belt, because he dressed for action, not for show. He just ate whatever he could find in the desert, so he ²lived on locusts and the honey of wild bees.

The important thing about John was what he told the people. He said: Someone is coming soon who is much more powerful than I am, and much more useful to you. I'm not good enough even to take off his sandals, as a junior servant does.

I'm just ³baptising you with water. But he will do something much greater: He will ⁴baptise you with God's Holy Spirit.

¹He wore a leather belt: We need to understand how people dressed in the hot Middle East in those times. Both men and women, boys and girls, wore a long, loose robe. When the men went to work, or needed to travel or run, they lifted up the bottom of the robe and tucked it into their belt. Their legs would then not get tangled in the robe. But when they walked slowly, in town, their robes would hang right down to their feet. This looked smarter than tucking the bottom of the robe into their belt. Rich people, important people, powerful people never tucked their robes into a belt.

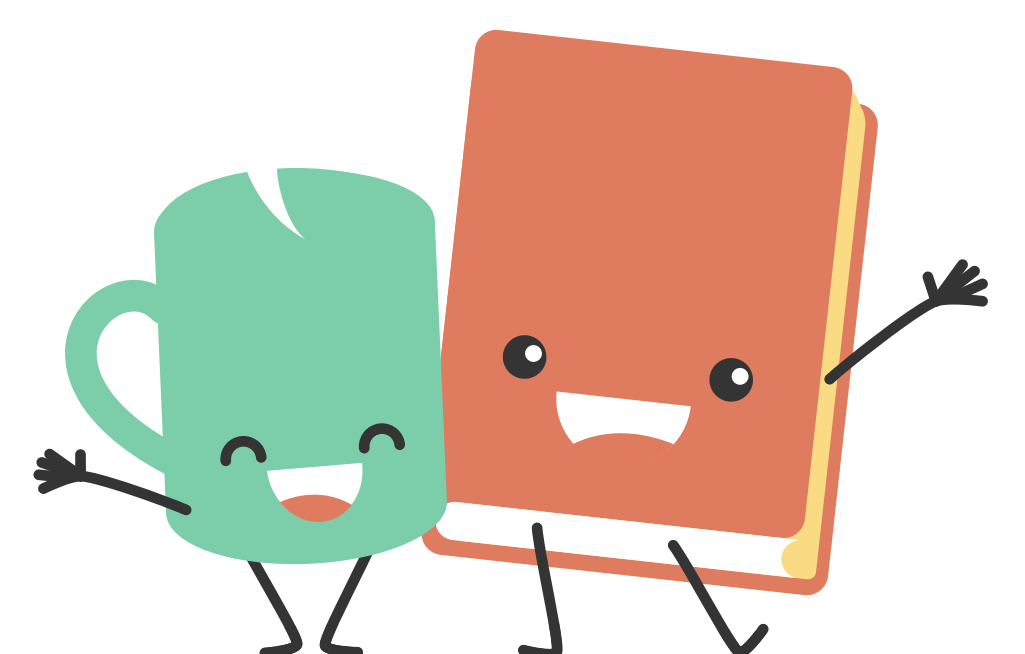
²lived on locusts and the honey of wild bees: Locusts provide quite good food. They have plenty of protein, which is good for strength, as well as some fat that provides energy. Honey has lots of sugar, and it gives one lots of energy. Honey is a very healthy food. It is the only food that does not get rotten after a long time.



Long ago in a Sunday School the teacher told the children that John lived on locusts and wild honey.

When one little boy was asked what he knew about John the Baptist he said: "He ate locusts and was wild hungry!"

Not quite what teacher said.



³**baptising you with water**: Being baptised with water means that someone regrets being dirty, and wants to become clean.

Baptism is a sign that one really wants to stop sinning against God and would like to live a better life in future.

⁴**baptise you with God's Holy Spirit**: Baptism with God's Holy Spirit does something far greater than baptism with water:

God's Holy Spirit makes us what we want to be and what we should be:

- **He helps us to stop sinning.**
- **His Spirit actually makes us clean.** He cleans our inner life, our soul and heart.
- **He gets our thinking right, as well as our attitude.** He makes us what God wants us to be.
- **God's Spirit helps us to do what we ought to do.**
- **He changes us and makes us better people.**
- **God's Holy Spirit enables us to keep God's laws and to live with a clear conscience.**

Baptism with water is a sign that we want to become clean.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit makes us clean.

Water baptism is repenting for sin.

The Holy Spirit's baptism puts an end to sin.

Water baptism means we have come to believe truly and really in heaven, and we hope to go there.

The Holy Spirit's baptism gets us safely to heaven.

1:9-11 JESUS IS ALSO BAPTISED BY JOHN

Then something especially important happened in those days when John was baptising people. Jesus, who was from Nazareth in Galilee, came there. ¹He was also baptised in the Jordan River by John.

Then, straight after that, as Jesus was getting up out of the water, ²he saw heaven being ripped open. He saw the Spirit of God, looking like a dove, coming down and onto him.

Then there came a voice out of heaven: ³You are my Son whom I love so much. I am very, very pleased with you!

¹He was also baptised: Jesus was baptised, but it was not because he was a sinner or needed to repent and be forgiven. Jesus was baptised to show, **first**, that God was pleased with him. **Secondly**, it was to show that God appointed Jesus to baptise with the Holy Spirit. **Thirdly**, by being baptised by John it showed that God and Jesus approved of the work that John was doing for both God and Jesus.

A sinner is someone that God is not pleased with. Jesus was different: he was perfect. He had never sinned, not even when he was young. He received God's Holy Spirit in this special way, as a prize from God, because he had always pleased God. He had loved and obeyed God even as a baby and a boy. He had also never failed to love and obey the Lord as a man.

Jesus was different: he was perfect. He had never sinned, not even when he was young.

Jesus was baptised something like 3 or 4 years before 30 AD. He was then about thirty years old.

**interesting
fact**

Many years ago, it was decided that the date when Jesus was born would be the year zero in history. The world then used that as its dating system. The years before Christ were called BC (Before Christ), and the years after Christ were called AD (the Latin words, Anno Domini, meaning, In the year of the Lord.) So the year 2000 should be exactly 2,000 years after Jesus was born.

But later experts have discovered small mistakes in the original calculations. Jesus was born somewhere between 2 and 5 BC, and not in the year zero.

But when the mistakes were found it was too late to change the dating system that the world was using. Also, we still do not know in exactly what year Jesus was born, or died.

No one can change the dates of history, but people who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God have found a way to change the way the dates are written. Instead of saying 1000 BC or 1000 AD, they prefer to write the dates as 1000 BCE or 1000 CE.

CE stands for the Christian Era, and BCE stands for Before the Christian Era. They thus shift the focus from the life of Jesus Christ to the history of the Christian church.

²**he saw heaven:** Because the Holy Spirit is invisible, God made sure that something could be seen when he sent his Holy Spirit down onto Jesus. The sky was torn open, and a dove flew down out of heaven and into Jesus.

The sky was opened up to reveal heaven beyond it. Heaven is real, even though it is normally invisible to us. The dove coming down was visible. God made sure that what he was doing for Jesus, with his Holy Spirit, could be clearly seen. God also made sure that he himself, who is God, could be heard on this special occasion. God publicly announced that Jesus was his dear Son, and that he was very pleased with him.

This is the only time in the gospels when God the **Father** in heaven, and his **Son** at the Jordan River, together with his **Holy Spirit**, all came into the picture at the same time. Just this once the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit could be seen or heard together.

³**You are my Son:** In the Bible “the son” means someone who is like his father. So the Son of God means someone who is just like God. When Jesus Christ is called the Son of God it means that he is actually God. Here it is God himself who is calling Jesus his own Son.

The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit are God.

1:12-13 JESUS IS TEMPTED BY SATAN

Straight after being baptised, ¹the Holy Spirit made Jesus go out into the desert.

He was in the desert a long time, for ²forty days. During this time he was challenged and ³tempted by Satan, the devil, who put him under great pressure and strain. He was also surrounded by wild animals that were dangerous. But angels looked after him.

¹the Holy Spirit made Jesus go: Mark uses a strong word here. He says that the Holy Spirit “chased” Jesus out into the desert. The Holy Spirit made Jesus go there, the way a boss might order a worker to do a difficult and unpleasant task. Mark uses the same word when he says later on in this chapter that Jesus “chased” a demon out of a man.

What this means is that the Holy Spirit took Jesus through a very difficult and unpleasant experience. This was the sort of difficulty that Jesus, as a man, did not want to do. But the Holy Spirit of God made him do it, and Jesus was willing to get on with what God wanted him to do, even if he did not look forward to doing it.

In the same way God makes all of us go through hard and upsetting times in our lives. But God also gives us the Holy Spirit to help us through those difficulties.

²forty days: Forty days is mentioned a number of times in the Bible. It means that something very important was happening. Imagine going to a local sports meeting that lasts for a day, and then going to an international sporting event that lasts for a month. You would then easily notice which one is more important. The following important events took place in the Bible:

- The rain in Noah’s flood lasted **40 days**.
- When Jacob died in Egypt his son Joseph had him embalmed. It took **40 days**.
- Moses was with the Lord on top of Mount Sinai [sigh-nigh] for **40 days**.
- The men Moses sent to inspect the land of Canaan [kay-nin] took **40 days** to spy out the country.
- For **40 days** Goliath [g’ligh-ith] challenged the Israelites to find a soldier who could fight him.
- Elijah the prophet travelled for **40 days** through the desert in his great struggle against the evil of Queen Jezebel [jez-z’bel], and her husband, the wicked King Ahab [ay-hab] of Israel.

- Jonah warned the evil city of Nineveh [nin-a-va] that they had **40 days** in which to repent, or else God would destroy them.
- After he was baptised, Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert for **40 days**.
- After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to his followers for **40 days**.

This was to prove that he was really alive, and to prepare them to continue his work.

Jesus' temptation by the devil is a very important part of the gospel. Jesus went off alone into the desert. He faced the temptation as a man. He had nothing to eat, and became weak and tired and hot and cold, as well as lonely. It was a miserable forty days for Jesus. The devil took full advantage of this. But Jesus never gave in to him.

In the gospels of Matthew and Luke we are told what the devil's temptations were. But the important thing is that Jesus stood up to the devil.

- He showed the devil that it is possible for a human being to do God's will.
- He showed us how we must do God's will no matter how difficult things are for us.
- Most importantly, he showed everyone that he was truly fit to be God's Son and also the Messiah and leader of God's people. He is perfectly fit to be our Saviour to save us from the devil and sin.

³tempted by Satan: Jesus was tempted or challenged by the devil. This would show us that Jesus, although he was the Son of God, had the same sort of struggles that we have in life. Since Jesus was tempted it is a sign that those who believe in Jesus can also expect to be tempted by the devil.

Temptation is when we find it very hard to do what is right, and would much rather do what is easier, even if it is wrong. Being tempted to do what we should not do when we are down and discouraged and struggling is very, very hard. We need God's Spirit to help us keep to what is right. This is like a war. If the devil gets us to give in to temptation he wins a battle. We must not give in and surrender to the devil. That is our Christian duty. We are to stick to God's will and God's orders.

We need God's Spirit to help us keep to what is right.

When we don't give in to temptation it is a good sign that we are genuine believers.

1:14-15 JESUS BEGINS TO PREACH

After John was arrested and put to death, Jesus came into Galilee. There he announced the gospel, the good news of God.

He told the people that the time the prophets had predicted had now come. Jesus said: ¹The kingdom of God is near. It is now here, just as the prophets predicted. So you must repent and change the way you live. You must believe the gospel.

¹The kingdom of God: The Kingdom of God has two meanings:

- **The first is that God now comes into our lives.** He rules over us. We become his people. God comes first in our lives. We obey him. We do what he says and what he wants. He is our King, our Lord and Ruler. We are his people. He looks after us. It means that we have now found the answer to life, and how to live well.
- **The second meaning is that God is going to take over the whole world one day.** He will get rid of everything that is bad and wrong, and make the whole world a perfect and lovely place to live in. This means that the kingdom of God is the same as heaven. It is glorious! It means that we have something lovely and wonderful to look forward to.

Jesus was saying that it is most important that we are ready to meet God. If heaven is near it means that we are soon going to have to meet God. We never know how soon that may be. We must all be ready for it at all times.

1:16-18 JESUS CALLS SIMON AND ANDREW

As Jesus was walking next to ¹the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing their nets into the sea. They were fishermen.

Jesus said to Simon and Andrew: Come with me! I'm going to train you to work for God. Instead of fishing for fish, you will fish for people.

²They immediately left their nets, and went off with Jesus.

¹**the sea of Galilee**: The sea of Galilee is a large inland lake. It is over 20 kilometres long and nearly 10 kilometres wide. It is over 600 feet below sea level (nearly 200 metres.) It's a lovely lake, and contains a lot of fish. So there were many fishermen living there.

A river from Mount Hermon [her-min] in the north flows into Lake Galilee. Water then flows out of the southern part of the lake into the Jordan River where John was baptising. The Jordan River ends in the Dead Sea, which is the lowest place on earth, far below sea level.

²**They immediately left their nets**: Peter and Andrew both gave up their work as fishermen to go and work for Jesus. They believed that Jesus was more important than their own business.

1:19-20 JESUS CALLS JAMES AND JOHN

Going a bit further, Jesus saw James and his brother John. They were the sons of Zebedee [ze-b'dee], and were busy mending their fishing nets.

Jesus then called them as well. ¹James and John left their father Zebedee in the boat, with the fishermen who worked for him, and they went off with Jesus.

¹**James and John left their father Zebedee**: It looks as though Zebedee was an important man. He had built up a big business, which would one day belong to James and John. Yet both James and John could see that Jesus was more important than their Dad and his successful business. Zebedee was much older than Jesus. Yet he also realised that his two sons should do what Jesus asked them to do. He let them go. This was even though he probably wanted them to take over his successful business one day.

1:21-26 JESUS CHASES A DEMON OUT OF A MAN

Jesus and his followers went into the town of ¹Capernaum [k'per-nee-im]. When it was ²the Sabbath day Jesus went straightaway to ³the synagogue, where he started to teach.

The believers were utterly amazed at Jesus' teaching, because he spoke as though he knew all about God, and could explain clearly what God wanted us to know and to do. He taught with authority. He spoke the truth. Their usual teachers were quite different. Although they had been trained in God's laws, they were sometimes unsure about exactly what God wanted. Often they did not understand the Bible well enough to make it really clear to people. They were not reliable teachers.

Suddenly, during their worship in the synagogue, a man with ⁴a demon in him shouted out at Jesus:

Leave us alone, Jesus of Nazareth! Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: You are the Holy One who has come from God!

But Jesus got angry and rebuked the demon. He said: Stop it! Be quiet! Come out of this man!

The demon caused the man to shake violently, but then with a loud shriek it came out of him.

¹**Capernaum:** Capernaum [k'per-nee-im] is at the top end, the north end, of the Sea of Galilee. That is the town where Simon Peter and Andrew lived. Capernaum was a fishing town, a little to the west of the Upper Jordan River where it flows down into the Lake of Galilee. The town Bethsaida [beth-sai-ee-da] is on the other side of the river, to the east.

²**the Sabbath:** The Jews worshipped God on Saturdays. That was the Sabbath day during Jesus' life and work. It was the seventh day of the week, the day God finished his work when he created the heavens and the earth. God rested on that day and made it holy. Jesus kept the Sabbath.

The change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday was begun during the time of the apostles because it was the day that Jesus rose from the dead.

Acts 20.7: On the first day of the week (Sunday) the Christians were gathered together to break bread.

In later years the Sabbath showed the difference between the Jews and the Christians. The Jews did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. The Christians did believe in Christ, and that he had risen from the dead. The Jews continued to worship on Saturday while the Christians started to worship on Sunday, called the Lord's Day.

Revelation 1.10: I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

The Lord's Day became important to Christians when people confused them with the Jews. The problem was that many Christians were Jews. On top of that both Jews and Christians believed in the Scriptures. (That was the Old Testament.) Most people came to know the difference between the Jewish and the Christian religions because Christians got together to worship God on Sunday. This was to honour and celebrate the day that Jesus rose from the dead. That was the day that Christ conquered sin and death and the devil.

About six hundred years later the religion of Islam came into existence. The Muslims, who follow the prophet Mohammed, keep their Sabbath on Friday, the Jews on Saturday, and the Christians on Sunday. These are three completely different religions of the world.

³**the synagogue:** The synagogue [sin-a-gog] was a Jewish church. That is where the Jews gathered together to worship God, to study the Bible, and to pray. Syn-agogue [sin-a-gog] is a Jewish Greek word that means "together-gathering." Christians use the words "church" or "congregation" or "assembly." It all means the same thing. It means getting together because we believe in the Lord.

⁴**a demon:** We do not know much about demons. Demons are spirits that are extremely bad. Long ago they used to be angels in heaven. But they rebelled against God. They were led by the devil who had been a senior angel to begin with. He led the rebellion in heaven against God and his Son Jesus. But Jesus defeated the devil and his followers. They were then expelled from heaven and put into prison, to wait for Judgement Day.

Jesus demonstrated that he had more power than the demon.

But some of them were able to get out, or be let out, somehow. They then looked for an opportunity to get into certain people. In the time of Jesus they were very active. It seems that all these evil spirits declared war against God yet again by attacking all sorts of people when Jesus was a man on earth. They took over people's lives. They made those people do and say horrible things. There was little or nothing anyone could do to put a stop to this. Demons could be very powerful. People were very scared of them because they did a lot of harm.

Jesus demonstrated that he had more power than the demon. The demon knew very well who Jesus was, even though the people did not.

This showed clearly that Jesus was the holy One of God. The demon admitted it.

Jesus chased many demons out of a lot of people. That was an important part of his work, mainly among the Jews, but also for people from other countries.

The reason why there was so much demonic activity at that time was because the country was in such a poor state. There was little proper faith in God, and a big lack of obedience to God. Therefore the nation was suffering in all sorts of ways. Active demons were just one of the great problems people had to suffer from and live with. There were also a lot of sicknesses among the people.

Another major problem was that the country had been conquered by the Romans. The Romans ruled over the Jews, and forced their authority and ideas on them. Life was very hard for the Jews, and there was a lot of suffering, in the time of Jesus Christ.

**Jesus was
the holy One
of God.**

We have more trouble from demons than we usually realise. Wherever there is cruelty, evil, bitter or nasty ruthlessness, terrorism, war, hatred of God and God's people, demons are behind it or involved in it. In some cases ugly sicknesses or mad behaviour can also be caused by demons. Demons can either attack good people or take control of some people who do not believe in the Lord. Demons can also cause trouble among religious people.

We have two means of defence against demons and against fear. They are:

- to believe in God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and
- to obey God's commands and orders and be faithful to Christ Jesus.

We have two weapons against demons and against fear. They are:

- to believe in God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and
- to obey God's commands and orders and be faithful to Christ Jesus.

1:27-28 PEOPLE ARE AMAZED AT JESUS' TEACHING

All the people there were stunned, and even frightened. It caused them to do a lot of talking with one another about what had happened. They said: What is this? It's a new kind of teaching, with ¹amazing authority! He can even tell demons what to do, and they have to obey him.

News about what Jesus had done straightaway spread in all directions through the whole area of Galilee.

¹**amazing authority**: In the past, whenever religious leaders had tried to get rid of a demon, there had always been a great performance. A special ceremony was laid on, with lots of loud, earnest praying, and noise. People got worked up to try to drive or frighten the demon away. In those days trying to get rid of a demon was as difficult and as frightening as trying to hunt a lion. It required a tremendously bold effort by a whole group of men.

No one had ever heard of someone simply telling it to go, and then it goes - just like that!

1:29-31 JESUS HEALS PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Straight after this Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue, and they went to the home of Peter and Andrew. James and John were with them.

Now the mother of Peter's wife was sick. She was lying in bed, helpless, with a fever. As soon as Jesus got there, they told him about her.

Jesus went to her, and he got her up just by taking her hand. Immediately her high temperature left her and she was completely better. ¹She even got busy serving a meal for them.

¹**She even got busy**: Usually when a person has been sick, and gets better, he or she feels weak for a while. So a person first has to get better, and then get stronger. When Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law she not only became well straight away, but she also became strong immediately. She wanted to serve them a meal. She felt like it. She had completely recovered her health and her strength and her interest in cooking and making lunch. Amazing!

1:32-34 JESUS HEALS MANY PEOPLE

Then evening came. For the Jews, this was ¹the end of the Sabbath day. So when the sun set people started bringing all those who were sick to Jesus. They also brought people who had demons in them.

The whole town was gathered together at the door of Peter's home.

Jesus then healed many sick people who had all kinds of illnesses and diseases. He also chased away many demons. He never allowed the demons to say anything, because ²they knew him.

¹the end of the Sabbath: The Jewish Sabbath began on Friday evening, when the sun set, and lasted until sunset on Saturday. So, for the Jews, the Sabbath day ended early on Saturday evening.

Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law who was sick when he visited her on the Sabbath, but the people of the town had to wait until the end of the Sabbath before being healed.

There is a difference between helping someone in need on the Sabbath, and working on the Sabbath.

What a lovely way to end the Sabbath: getting healed; getting better; recovering one's health and strength and interest in life!

What a lovely way to end the Sabbath: taking someone who was ill or suffering to get completely healed!

²they knew him: The demons knew that **Jesus was the Son of God**. Jesus did not want people to know this because it would cause trouble with the religious leaders who did not like him and the work that he was doing. They were jealous of him. If they heard that he called himself the Son of God, they would say that he was dishonouring God, and have him killed.

Jesus spent a lot of his time and energy helping people and making them better.

That is exactly what happened in the end, when they had Jesus arrested, charged with insulting God, and then made sure that the Romans crucified him.

It is clear from what Mark tells us that Jesus spent a lot of his time and energy helping people and making them better. He was a very kind person. During his time on earth he must have brought relief and happiness to many, many people.

He is a wonderful man!

He has continued to do this throughout the world and throughout history since he went back to heaven.

He is a wonderful God!

1:35-39 JESUS PRAYS AND MOVES ON

Very early the next morning, while it was still dark, Jesus left the house and went away to a lonely place. There he prayed.

But Peter, and some friends with him, tracked him down.

They found Jesus, and said to him: All the people are looking for you.

But Jesus said to them: Let's go off somewhere else, to the other villages and towns around here, so that I can also preach there. That's ¹the reason why ²I've come away.

So Jesus went around preaching in their synagogues throughout the whole of Galilee. He also chased demons out of people who suffered from them.

¹**the reason why:** Jesus did not do what people wanted him to do, even when they liked him and wanted him. He did what God wanted him to do.

Mark lets us know what Jesus was praying about. Peter and his friends wanted Jesus to stay where he was, because everyone was looking for him. But Jesus had been praying, and knew that God wanted him to move on to other places so that he could preach there as well. He knew that he was needed everywhere in Galilee. That was God's purpose for him.

²**I've come away:** In the English version of the Bible it says, **That's the reason why I've come.**

People then think that Jesus means that this is the reason he had come to earth from heaven.

But in the Greek version it says, That's the reason why I've come out. Jesus means that he has come away from the house belonging to Peter. Jesus wanted to get away from the people he had helped so that he could pray. He also wanted to get away from all of them so that he could go to help other people who needed him.

When one becomes popular, it is not easy to get away from people. It takes a special effort. Serving God is not about becoming popular, as politicians try to be.

To serve God is to do God's will.

To know God's will we need to pray and to listen to him.

When one becomes successful it is difficult to get away from success. It takes a very special effort. Serving God is not about becoming successful, as everybody tries to be.

To serve God is to do God's will.

To know God's will we need to pray and to listen to him.

1:40-45 JESUS HEALS A MAN WHO HAD LEPROSY

A man with ¹leprosy came to Jesus begging him for help. He went on pleading with Jesus. He would even go down on his knees in front of him. He kept on pleading, saying: If you want to you are able to make me well.

Although ²Jesus got cross with the man, he reached out his hand and touched him. No one had ever touched him since he had caught this dreadful disease. Then Jesus said to him: Yes, I DO want to help you! So, get well.

Straightaway the leprosy left him, and his skin became completely healthy and normal.

But Jesus sent him away immediately with a strict warning and a clear order:

He said to him: Make sure that you do not say anything to anyone, but ³go straight to the priest and show him your skin. Then give thanks to God for your healing, the way the Bible says. Now off you go, straightaway, and see that you do as you are told!

But instead of doing what Jesus had told him to do, the man went away and started to do a lot of talking. He went around telling everyone everywhere what had happened to him. The result was that Jesus was no longer able to go freely into any town without creating a lot of excitement. He now had to stay out in the empty desert countryside. Yet people still came to him from everywhere.

What Mark writes about here is difficult to understand for three reasons:

- **First**, the disease leprosy was horrible. It was so horrible that someone with leprosy was not allowed to go anywhere near other people. Nor was anyone allowed to go near the person with leprosy. That was to avoid catching that horrid disease.
- **Secondly**, why did Jesus get cross with this man who had leprosy? The reason is that the man talked too much, and this ended up causing Jesus a lot of trouble.
- **Thirdly**, when Jesus healed the man, he told him to go to the priest. This was because only the priest could give him permission to go back home and live with other people again - if he ever got better.

¹**leprosy**: This was one of the worst diseases in those days. It caused a person's skin and flesh to rot away.

The worst thing was that he had to stay away from everybody, so that nobody else would also catch this horrible disease. Those with leprosy were cut off from everyone else. No one dared to go anywhere near them. They were outcasts. They lived lonely and miserable lives. Anyone with leprosy was cut off even from his own family. That is why they were called lepers. It was an awful stigma, on top of being a lonely, miserable and most uncomfortable handicap. To have leprosy was horrid!

By disobeying Jesus this man caused Jesus a lot of trouble: Jesus could no longer work the way he wanted to.

²**Jesus got cross with the man**: Here we have a problem. If you turn to the Bible, you will find that it may say that Jesus touched the man because he was filled with compassion for him.

There are experts who think that what Mark actually wrote was that Jesus was cross with the man when he touched him. Then, many years later, someone else changed what Mark had written. That person wrote that Jesus reached out and touched the man because he was sorry for him. It was changed because that is what most people would like to think Jesus did. It sounds better. That's the sort of person that people believe Jesus to be. And, of course, that is true. Jesus was someone who cared deeply for others and felt sympathy for them in their suffering. But this time there was a problem, and it was not Jesus' fault; it was the man with leprosy's fault.

The problem is that when Jesus gave the man a strict order not to tell anyone anything, but to go straight to the priest, he was definitely cross with him. Mark clearly says so.

Then Mark tells us why Jesus got cross. It was because the man did not do what Jesus had clearly told him to do. By disobeying Jesus this man caused Jesus a lot of trouble: Jesus could no longer work the way he wanted to. He had wanted to go around the towns of Galilee. Now he had to stay away from them simply because this man would not do as he was told, even after he had been wonderfully helped.

The man asked Jesus for help because he knew that Jesus could help him. But he did not have enough faith or confidence in Jesus just to ask. He thought that he must put pressure on Jesus to get him to do this. So he pestered Jesus. The man was a nuisance because he talked too much. That annoyed Jesus. So Jesus gave him a firm, strict order not to talk to anyone, but to go straight to the priest.

The fact that Jesus touched the man, and healed him, shows clearly that Jesus DID feel sorry for him. That is so obvious that Mark did not need to say it.

Jesus sorted out the man's problems even though the man caused him problems. What we can learn from this is that even believing Christians can be a nuisance at times. There come times when we know what we would like and may then feel that we must push people to get what we want. Jesus was against this. What is important is simple faith in the Lord. All we need to do is ask, and then wait. There is no need to be pushy just because something is important to us. Being pushy is unpleasant to other people, and therefore also to God.

What is important is simple faith in the Lord. All we need to do is ask, and then wait.

Jesus healed the man for two reasons:

- **The first was because the man believed that Jesus could help him.**
- **The second was because Jesus had compassion for him, and cared about him.** Getting cross with the man did not stop Jesus from caring and helping and saving him.

(Parents also do not stop caring for their children even if they do get cross with them sometimes. Nurses sometimes get cross with patients who will not do what they should, but most nurses still look after them, and look after them properly and well.)

How do experts know if a part of the Bible was changed by the early Christian church?

How do experts know?

In those days a lot of people made copies of the books of the Bible. If one compares all those copies one can see where differences occur. Experts can then get a good idea of where a copy was changed for any reason.

If you get a Greek Bible or New Testament, you can see which copies the experts looked at. They are listed at the bottom of the page. So, with a bit of training and a bit of practice you can actually understand how the experts decided where changes were made. You can follow how they worked out which were the oldest and the most reliable copies.

Christians kept making little changes to the gospels for nearly a thousand years after Christ. Then the experts said enough of that, and more or less agreed on what the writer of the book actually wrote. But they kept some of those changes if they felt that they were good ones. They kept other changes as footnotes at the bottom of each page.

This makes it possible for trained people to know what were the changes made by those who did the copying a long time ago.

³go straight to the priest: The Bible, written by Moses, said that if someone noticed something wrong with his skin, he had to go to the priest. The priest would examine his skin. The priest must then decide whether that person had leprosy, or not. If it really was leprosy, the priest would have to tell him to get out of town and stay away from all other people, even his own family.

Usually, if a person caught leprosy, he never got better. No one knew how to cure this disease. But the Bible also said that if anyone ever did get better, he must first go to the priest and show him that the leprosy was gone. The priest must examine the person's skin and decide whether he was truly healed. If he was indeed cured, the priest must perform a cleaning-up or cleansing ceremony for him. The man would also give God a gift to say, Thank You.

After this the priest will give him permission to go back home and live a normal life.

- In this way, if things were done properly, there would be no danger of anyone else catching the disease.

(You can read about this in the book of Leviticus, the first half of chapter 14.)

- If they obeyed God like this, then God would also get the thanks and respect that he deserves for having helped someone in such great trouble to get better. It would be a miracle.

- When Jesus told the man to go straight to the priest, it would also show the priests that God does still work miracles.
- It would also show the priests who worked for God how reliable the Bible is. The Bible told them what to do if someone did get better. And here was someone getting better even though no one thought that could happen. This would show the priests that the Bible was always right.
- It would also show these priests that Jesus did everything the way the Bible ordered. He always did things the right way, the Bible's way, which was God's way. Jesus kept God's rules.

That was why Jesus spent time praying before he set off on his journeys. He knew that things were going to be difficult, and especially that people were going to be difficult. He needed God's guidance and support and help. He got it by praying. To pray he needed to be alone.

The beginning of the gospel shows that Jesus not only helped people with their problems, but that he also had to deal with people who caused problems - even those who believed in him.

In this leprosy case Mark tells us that Jesus not only dealt with big problems that people had, but also with people who caused problems. This is all part of what the gospel is about.

The beginning of the gospel shows that

Jesus not only helped people who had problems,

but he also had to deal with people who caused problems -

problems caused even by people who believed in him.



Index



alexandra-fuller@unsplash

VOLUME 1

- 1.1 Genesis 1-3
- 1.2 Mark 1
- 1.3 Ruth 1-4
- 1.4 Acts 1

VOLUME 2

- 2.1 Job 1-7
- 2.2 John 1
- 2.3 Micah 1-4
- 2.4 1 John 1-5

VOLUME 3

- 3.1 Exodus 11-15
- 3.2 Matthew 2
- 3.3 Joshua 1-4
- 3.4 Romans 8

VOLUME 4

- 4.1 Psalms 16-23
- 4.2 Luke 4
- 4.3 Isaiah 5-9
- 4.4 1 Thessalonians 4

VOLUME 5

- 5.1 Leviticus 6-8
- 5.2 John 6
- 5.3 1 Samuel 15-18
- 5.4 1 Corinthians 15

VOLUME 6

- 6.2 Proverbs 2-3 & 11-13
- 6.2 Luke 6
- 6.3 Jeremiah 28-31
- 6.4 Galatians 5

VOLUME 7

- 7.1 Numbers 13-16
- 7.2 Mark 8-9
- 7.3 1 Kings 17-19
- 7.4 Hebrews 4-5

VOLUME 8

- 8.1 Ecclesiastes 6-7
- 8.2 Matthew 5-7
- 8.3 Ezekiel 33-36
- 8.4 1 Peter 4-5

VOLUME 9*

- (9.1) Deuteronomy 4-7
- (9.2) John 17-18 (Crucifixion)
- (9.3) 2 Chronicles 5-10
- (9.4) James 1

VOLUME 10*

- (10.1) Song of Solomon 3-5
- (10.2) Matthew 28 (Resurrection)
- (10.3) Daniel 2-5
- (10.4) Revelation 7-8

VOLUME 11*

- (11.1) Genesis 15-22
- (11.2) Mark 12
- (11.3) Ezra 3-7
- (11.4) Ephesians 1

VOLUME 12*

- (12.1) Psalms 115-122
- (12.2) Luke 16
- (12.3) Isaiah 53-61
- (12.4) 2 Timothy 2-3

THE NEXT SEVEN VOLUMES 2 to 8 ARE IN PRODUCTION.

*(Further volumes 9 to 12 are to be planned, researched and written, God willing.)



COPYRIGHT NOTICE

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without express written permission of the author except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Into The Bible®