

# MARK

## Week 2: Mark 3-4

### *How to Use This Discussion Guide with Your Group*

Start with a prayer and read the portion of the text from your Bible or an app (use whatever translation you're comfortable with, but we suggest the New Living Translation (NLT) or the English Standard Version (ESV)). Then read the summary paragraph(s) and talk through the questions for that section. You can work through this guide in one session or spread it out over several – whatever works for your group. As you read and discuss, consider how what you're reading applies to your life today. Don't forget to close with prayer!

### **3:20-35: JESUS FACES CRITICISM**

The teachers of the law come from Jerusalem—their headquarters. They explain Jesus' power over demons. They say he is possessed by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. But Jesus has the perfect answer for them. If Satan is overthrowing his own agents, then the kingdom of hell is collapsing. But Jesus is angry. To say a work of God is the work of Satan is an outrageous lie and a dreadful blasphemy. It is unforgivable.<sup>1</sup>

1. What is something you've done that made your family or friends wonder if you were crazy?
2. Why was Jesus' family worried about Him? What type of conversation might they have had before deciding to "take charge of him?"
3. What tensions might these people feel when they hear what the Pharisees say about Jesus?
4. How do Jesus' parables answer the "teachers of the law?" How do they relate to verse 29?
5. What did the crowd expect in verses 31-32? What did Jesus say is the basis for a family relationship with Him (v. 35)? Is doing God's will an action or a belief (see Luke 6:46; John 6:29)?
6. What do you need to do with your life before Jesus can more fully be the Master of your life?
7. Have you ever experienced a conflict between what God wanted for you and what your family expected of you?
8. Of the responses to Jesus in this chapter (3:6, 8, 21-22, 34-35), which best describes your relationship to Him now? Why?

### **4:1-20: THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER**

For the first time in Mark's Gospel we are able to listen to Jesus teaching. He sits in a boat, so that the crowd doesn't overwhelm him, and teaches the people along the shore.

He describes a farmer scattering seed. The seed lands in various places—on a path, on rock, among thorns and on good soil. The birds snatch it from the path, the sun scorches it on the rock and the thorns choke it! But the good soil produces a wonderful harvest.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (1st Augsburg books ed.; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 450.

This is a parable. Jesus tells many such stories. He leaves it to his hearers to make the connection between his everyday images and the kingdom of God.

Later, the Twelve ask Jesus what these parables mean. He explains that the good news of the kingdom is like a secret being shared. Some people are spiritually blind and can't see it. Some are spiritually deaf and can't hear it. Some refuse to believe in God and block it out. He reminds them that the prophet Isaiah had to live with this frustration. Isaiah also delivered God's message to people who couldn't or wouldn't receive it (Isaiah 6:9–10). Now Jesus is doing the same.

He explains the parable of the sower. The seed is a picture of God's good news being broadcast. The different places it falls are people's hearts. Some hearts are hard, some shallow, some overcrowded and some open and deep. In spite of all the setbacks, the good news is going to produce a record harvest.<sup>2</sup>

1. What is the oldest house plant you own? What is the shortest time you have kept a house plant living?
2. What are the four types of ground on which these seeds fall? What kind of growth occurred in each soil type?
3. How might this crowd have responded to such a parable? How are the parables like a spiritual hearing test? What blocks understanding? What distinguishes those who are told "the secret of the kingdom" from those "outside"?
4. Why does the word not take root at all in some people? What causes the second plant to wither? What three things choked off the third plant?
5. What modern analogy would you use to explain this parable to city kids who have never seen a farm?
6. Which soil would best describe your response to the Gospel when you first heard it? What kind of crop have you been producing lately?
7. What "worries of life, deceitfulness of wealth and desires for other things" might hinder your ability to produce a bountiful crop?
8. What do you need to do so your spiritual life is producing an abundant crop?

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (1st Augsburg books ed.; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 451.