

MARK

Author: Mark **Date of writing:** AD 50–55

INTRODUCTION

Mark teaches us principles of divine inspiration

The book of Mark is the second of the Gospels in the Bible, but many scholars believe that it was the first one written and that the other Gospels often quoted from Mark. Others contend that Matthew was written first and that Mark sometimes quoted from Matthew. In any case, the human author of this Gospel was John Mark, a companion of the apostle Peter.

Mark was also a missionary, Barnabas's cousin, and a friend of Paul at the beginning and end of Paul's ministry. The divine Author of this Gospel, and of the rest of Scripture, was the Holy Spirit, who inspired Mark to write precisely what we need to know about Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the Messiah, and our Savior.

Mark teaches us principles of divine incarnation

Mark emphasized Jesus's miracles in order to show that Jesus was the Son of God, yet he also showed us the humanity of Jesus and his emotions. Mark recorded that Jesus was at various times "amazed," "indignant," "hungry," and "deeply distressed and troubled." Through his humanity, Jesus suffered and

was tempted so that he can identify with us. Knowing our weaknesses, Jesus both taught and demonstrated that we should take time to get away from the crowds, to rest and pray. Then, through his divinity, he conquered sin and death so that we can live forever with him.

Mark teaches us principles of spiritual transformation

The Gospel of Mark introduces us to James and John, the tempestuous "Sons of Thunder" (3:17). Even though Jesus included them in his most intimate teaching occasions, before the resurrection they did not under-

stand what he had come to accomplish—they were still negotiating for political power. Later, in the book of Acts, Luke the historian chronicled their transformation to servant-leaders.

Mark teaches us Principles to Live By

Besides James and John, Mark noted that other followers, disciples, and apostles of Jesus were slow to catch on to the message of the suffering Messiah and good shepherd. Soon after Jesus miraculously fed thousands of people—twice!—his disciples were still worried

about food. Jesus expressed disappointment in the crowds who lacked faith and in the disciples who failed to believe the eyewitnesses to the resurrection. The father of a sick child expressed the struggle many of us face: "I do believe; help my unbelief!" (9:24).

MARK – Principles to Live By

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MARK

THE MESSIAH'S HERALD

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.^A ² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:^B

See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;

he will prepare your way.^{C,D}

³ A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight!^E

■ [Isaiah Principle 26 - Spiritual Preparation](#), p. 895.

■ [Malachi Principle 4 - The Second Coming](#), p. 1202.

⁴ John came baptizing^F in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. ⁶ John wore a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey.

⁷ He proclaimed, "One who is more powerful than I am is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. ⁸ I baptize you with^G water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

■ [Isaiah Principle 26 - Spiritual Preparation](#), p. 895.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. ¹⁰ As soon as he came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased."

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

¹² Immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness.

¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels were serving him.

MARK PRINCIPLE 1 - OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

When we're tempted to sin, we should take comfort in the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is our great high priest who can identify with every temptation we face.

Matthew recorded how Jesus used Scripture to combat Satan. ([See Matthew Principle 5 - The Power of Scripture](#), p. 1214.)

Mark's description of this event, though brief, adds to what we can learn and apply in our own lives today.

Though truly divine, when Jesus came to earth, he became truly human and entered into our experiences. Though we have a relationship with God, we are still subject to sin's influence. Though he was without sin, he was tempted in every way we are tempt-



ed in order to be our great high priest who intercedes for us at the right hand of God the Father. The author of Hebrews clarified this very encouraging truth:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need. (Heb 4:15-16) ([See Hebrews Principle 8 - Our Great High Priest](#), p. 1604.)

Reflection and Response

How should this Principle to Live By affect the way we face temptation?

MINISTRY IN GALILEE

¹⁴ After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news^{H,I} of God: ¹⁵ "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

¹⁶ As he passed alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, Simon's brother, casting a net into the

sea — for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Follow me," Jesus told them, "and I will make you fish for^J people." ¹⁸ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ Going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat putting their nets in order. ²⁰ Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

■ [Matthew Principle 6 - Dedicated Discipleship](#), p. 1215.

■ [Luke Principle 11 - Overcoming Fear](#), p. 1304.

^A1:1 Some mss omit the Son of God ^B1:2 Other mss read in the prophets ^C1:2 Other mss add before you ^D1:2 Mal 3:1 ^E1:3 Is 40:3 ^F1:4 Or John the Baptist came ^G1:8 Or in ^H1:14 Other mss add of the kingdom ^I1:14 Or gospel ^J1:17 Or you to become fishers of

DRIVING OUT AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT

²¹ They went into Capernaum, and right away he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach. ²² They were astonished at his teaching because he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not like the scribes.

²³ Just then a man with an unclean spirit was in their synagogue. He cried out, ²⁴ “What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are — the Holy One of God!”

²⁵ Jesus rebuked him saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶ And the unclean spirit threw him into convulsions, shouted with a loud voice, and came out of him.

²⁷ They were all amazed, and so they began to ask each other: “What is this? A new teaching with authority!^A He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸ At once the news about him spread throughout the entire vicinity of Galilee.

HEALINGS AT CAPERNAUM

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went into Simon and Andrew’s house with James and John. ³⁰ Simon’s mother-in-law was lying in bed with a fever, and

they told him about her at once. ³¹ So he went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her,^B and she began to serve them.

³² When evening came, after the sun had set, they brought to him all those who were sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town was assembled at the door, ³⁴ and he healed many who were sick with various diseases and drove out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

PREACHING IN GALILEE

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he got up, went out, and made his way to a deserted place; and there he was praying. ³⁶ Simon and his companions searched for him, ³⁷ and when they found him they said, “Everyone is looking for you.”

³⁸ And he said to them, “Let’s go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. This is why I have come.”

A MAN CLEANSED

³⁹ He went into all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

MARK PRINCIPLE 2 - RENEWING OUR STRENGTH

To renew our strength physically, psychologically, and spiritually, we must plan times to be alone with God.

Mark recorded a very busy day in Jesus’s life. After teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum, he spent the rest of the day and long into the evening healing the sick and demon-possessed (v. 34). What is amazing, however, is that knowing he faced another demanding day, he rose the next morning very early—“while it was still dark” (v. 35)—and found a place to be alone so that he could have uninterrupted fellowship with his heavenly Father.

If the Lord Jesus Christ—who was both God and man—at times needed to be alone with God to prepare himself to carry out his heavy schedule of activity effectively, how much more so for us who are only human?

Another important perspective on prayer becomes apparent as the biblical story unfolds. Though personal prayer is an essential discipline for effective Christian

living, the beautiful concept of the body of Christ introduced believers of all time to corporate prayer. In fact, the majority of references to prayer after the Gospels emphasized praying together and praying for one another. Jesus himself set the stage for this new corporate dynamic when he said,

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them. (Mt 18:19-20)

Reflection and Response

In view of our varied schedules and demands in our lives, in what creative ways can we plan times to be alone with God, reading his Word and spending time in prayer?



⁴⁰ Then a man with leprosy^C came to him and, on his knees,^D begged him: “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” ⁴¹ Moved with compassion,^E Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. “I am willing,” he told him. “Be made clean.” ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³ Then he sternly warned him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ telling him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer what Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to

them.”^F ⁴⁵ Yet he went out and began to proclaim it widely and to spread the news, with the result that Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. But he was out in deserted places, and they came to him from everywhere.

THE SON OF MAN FORGIVES AND HEALS

2 When he entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ² So many people gathered together that there was no more

^A1:27 Other mss read “What is this? What is this new teaching? For with authority” ^B1:31 Other mss add at once ^C1:40 Gk leprosy; a term for various skin diseases, also in v. 42; see Lv 13–14 ^D1:40 Other mss omit on his knees ^E1:41 Other mss Moved with indignation ^F1:44 Or against them

room, not even in the doorway, and he was speaking the word to them. ³ They came to him bringing a paralytic, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they were not able to bring him to ^A Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and after digging through it, they lowered the mat on which the paralytic was lying. ⁵ Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

⁶ But some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts: ⁷ “Why does he speak like this? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

⁸ Right away Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were thinking like this within themselves and said to them, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat, and walk?’ ¹⁰ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” — he told the paralytic — ¹¹ “I tell you: get up, take your mat, and go home.”

¹² Immediately he got up, took the mat, and went out in front of everyone. As a result, they were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

MARK PRINCIPLE 3 - PHYSICAL HEALING

Though many illnesses are certainly not caused by specific sins in our lives, we should always confess any known sins and restore our fellowship with God.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus clarified that a certain man’s blindness was not caused by sins in that man’s life or the sins of his parents (Jn 9:1-3). However, when Jesus healed a paralytic in Capernaum, he connected this man’s physical malady with specific sins. When Jesus forgave these sins and then told him to “take [his] mat, and go home,” he was healed (Mk 2:11).

All physical and psychological deterioration has roots in our spiritual condition. When sin entered the world in the garden of Eden, it impacted all aspects of our lives. However, to associate all illnesses with specific sins is an inaccurate assessment, and it’s certainly an act of cruelty against those who are living Christ-centered lives and yet are experiencing physical and psychological deterioration.



James acknowledged in his letter that some illnesses are indeed caused by specific sins. In calling for the elders of the local church to pray for us, James wrote,

The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect. (Jms 5:15-16) (See James Principle 14 - Prayers of the Righteous, p. 1626.)

Reflection and Response

Why must we be very careful not to associate various illnesses with specific sins in people’s lives, but at the same time give people an opportunity to confess any deliberate sins in order to have a clear conscience before God? (See Matthew Principle 21 - Physical Healing, p. 1224.)

THE CALL OF LEVI

¹³ Jesus went out again beside the sea. The whole crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. ¹⁴ Then, passing by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the toll booth, and he said to him, “Follow me,” and he got up and followed him.

¹⁵ While he was reclining at the table in Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating ^B with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who were following him. ¹⁶ When the scribes who were Pharisees ^C saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples, “Why does he eat ^D with tax collectors and sinners?”

¹⁷ When Jesus heard this, he told them, “It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

- Matthew Principle 23 - Witnessing for Christ, p. 1226.
- Luke Principle 12 - Redemptive Grace, p. 1305.

A QUESTION ABOUT FASTING

¹⁸ Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees ^E were fasting. People came and asked him, “Why do John’s disciples and the Pharisees’ disciples fast, but your disciples do not fast?”

¹⁹ Jesus said to them, “The wedding guests cannot fast while the groom is with them, can they? As long as they have the groom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰ But the time ^F will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. ²¹ No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new patch pulls away from the old cloth, and a worse tear is made. ²² And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost as well as the skins. No, new wine is put into fresh wineskins.”

- Matthew Principle 24 - Function and Form, p. 1226.

^A 2:4 Other mss read *able to get near* ^B 2:15 Lit *reclining together* ^C 2:16 Other mss read *scribes and Pharisees* ^D 2:16 Other mss add *and drink*
^E 2:18 Other mss read *The disciples of John and of the Pharisees* ^F 2:20 Or *the days*

LORD OF THE SABBATH

²³ On the Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to make their way, picking some heads of grain. ²⁴ The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”

²⁵ He said to them, “Have you never read what David and those who were with him did when he was in need and hungry — ²⁶ how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate the bread of the Presence — which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests — and also gave some to his companions?” ²⁷ Then he told them, “The Sabbath was made for ^a man and not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ So then, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

3 Jesus entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a shriveled hand. ² In order to accuse him, they were watching him closely to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath. ³ He told the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand before us.” ⁴ Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. ⁵ After looking around at them with anger, he was grieved at the hardness of their hearts and told the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶ Immediately the Pharisees went out and started plotting with the Herodians against him, how they might kill him.

■ [Matthew Principle 29 - Inappropriate Traditions, p. 1230.](#)

MINISTERING TO THE MULTITUDE

⁷ Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a large crowd followed from Galilee, and a large crowd followed from Judea, ⁸ Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and around Tyre and Sidon. The large crowd came to him because they heard about everything he was doing. ⁹ Then he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, so that the crowd wouldn’t crush him. ¹⁰ Since he had healed many, all who had diseases were pressing toward him to touch him. ¹¹ Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God!” ¹² And he would strongly warn them not to make him known.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

¹³ Jesus went up the mountain and summoned those he wanted, and they came to him. ¹⁴ He appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, ^b to be with him, to send them out to preach, ¹⁵ and to have authority to ^c drive out demons. ¹⁶ He appointed the Twelve: ^d To Simon, he gave the name Peter; ¹⁷ and to James the son of Zebedee, and to his brother John, he gave the name “Boanerges” (that is, “Sons of Thunder”); ¹⁸ Andrew; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thad-daeus; Simon the Zealot, ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

MARK PRINCIPLE 4 - TRANSFORMATION

We should allow the Holy Spirit to transform our negative tendencies into positive qualities that God can use to accomplish his purposes in this world. (See [Matthew Principle 26 - Equipping Leaders, p. 1228](#); [Luke Principle 13 - Leadership Appointments, p. 1306](#).)

Though he had changed Simon’s name to Peter months earlier, it appears that Jesus gave James and John the name “Sons of Thunder” (v. 17) when he appointed them as apostles. It was not complimentary as it was with Peter, but it reflected Jesus’s assessment of their present character traits. They would, of course, be dramatically changed during their time with the incar-

nate Christ, but they still demonstrated these insensitive, self-serving traits just before Jesus was crucified. However, when the Holy Spirit transformed their lives, James was the first apostle to give his life for Christ, and John became known as the apostle of love.

Reflection and Response

If Jesus changed your name to describe your character traits before you became a committed Christian, what might he have called you?



A HOUSE DIVIDED

²⁰ Jesus entered a house, and the crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat. ^e ²¹ When his family heard this, they set out to restrain him, because they said, “He’s out of his mind.”

²² The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and, “He drives out demons by the ruler of the demons.”

²³ So he summoned them and spoke to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ If a

house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is finished. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house.

²⁸ “Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for all sins and whatever blasphemies they utter. ²⁹ But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” ^f — ³⁰ because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

■ [Matthew Principle 30 - The Unpardonable Sin, p. 1231.](#)

^a2:27 Or because of ^b3:14 Other mss omit he also named them apostles ^c3:15 Other mss add heal diseases, and to ^d3:16 Other mss omit He appointed the Twelve ^e3:20 Or eat a meal; lit eat bread ^f3:29 Other mss read is subject to eternal judgment

TRUE RELATIONSHIPS

³¹ His mother and his brothers came, and standing outside, they sent word to him and called him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him and told him, “Look, your mother, your brothers, and your sisters^A are outside asking for you.”

³³ He replied to them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴ Looking at those sitting in a circle around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers!” ³⁵ Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

MARK PRINCIPLE 5 - UNFAIR ACCUSATIONS

When we devote our lives to following Christ, we must not be surprised and intimidated when unsaved family members and unconverted religious leaders accuse us falsely.

The accusations against Jesus were unprecedented.



His own family accused him of being crazy, and the religious leaders he had associated with as a young man accused him of demon possession. However, these accusations did not deter Jesus

from doing his Father’s will. He actually used his family relationships to illustrate that he had a greater purpose: to bring into being a new household—the family of God. (See [Matthew Principle 31 - God’s Spiritual Family](#), p. 1232.)

Reflection and Response

What are some of the ways unsaved family members and religious leaders may describe our own attempts to do the will of God?

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

4 Again he began to teach by the sea, and a very large crowd gathered around him. So he got into a boat on the sea and sat down, while the whole crowd was by the sea on the shore. ² He taught them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³ “Listen! Consider the sower who went out to sow. ⁴ As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn’t have much soil, and it grew up quickly, since the soil wasn’t deep. ⁶ When the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it didn’t produce fruit. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good ground and it grew up, producing fruit that increased thirty, sixty, and a hundred times.” ⁹ Then he said, “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen.”

WHY JESUS USED PARABLES

¹⁰ When he was alone, those around him with the Twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹ He answered them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those outside, everything comes in parables ¹² so that

they may indeed look,
and yet not perceive;
they may indeed listen,
and yet not understand;
otherwise, they might turn back
and be forgiven.”^{B,C}

■ [Isaiah Principle 7 - Living Holy Lives](#), p. 864.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER EXPLAINED

¹³ Then he said to them: “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand all of the parables? ¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ Some are like the word sown on the path. When they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word sown in them. ¹⁶ And others are like seed sown on rocky ground. When they hear the word, immediately they receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But they have no root; they are short-lived. When distress or persecution comes because of the word, they immediately fall away. ¹⁸ Others are like seed sown among thorns; these are the ones who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the worries of this age, the deceitfulness^E of wealth, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²⁰ And those like seed sown on good ground hear the word, welcome it, and produce fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundred times what was sown.”

MARK PRINCIPLE 6 - BEING FAITHFUL WITNESSES

Although many will not respond positively, we are to communicate the message of the Bible faithfully, both by word and by example.

Jesus began to teach with parables in order to communicate more clearly with those who were sincerely seeking truth and to hide the truth from those who

had ultimately rejected him by attributing his miracles to Satan. (See [Matthew Principle 32 - The Ministry of the Spirit](#), p. 1233.) In the parable of the sower, Jesus demonstrated that we must faithfully sow the seed of the Word of God

- regardless of Satan’s counterefforts (Mk v. 15), ►

^A3:32 Other mss omit *and your sisters* ^B4:12 Other mss read *and their sins be forgiven them* ^C4:12 Is 6:9-10 ^D4:15 Other mss read *in their hearts* ^E4:19 Or *seduction*

- ▶ regardless of our listener's superficial responses (vv. 16-17), and
- regardless of those who become believers but choose to remain immature and carnal (vv. 18-19).

The Word of God is quick and powerful, and there will be those who will actually respond and choose to live in God's will (v. 20; Heb 4:12). Even those who are immature in their faith will at some point begin to respond to biblical teaching and grow spiritually—if indeed they are true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 2:10).

USING YOUR LIGHT

²¹ He also said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed? Isn't it to be put on a lampstand? ²² For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen." ²⁴ And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear. By the measure you use, it will be measured to you — and more will be added to you. ²⁵ For whoever has, more will be given to him, and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

THE PARABLE OF THE GROWING SEED

²⁶ "The kingdom of God is like this," he said. "A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day; the seed sprouts and grows, although he doesn't know how. ²⁸ The soil produces a crop by itself

Reflection and Response

Though God is ultimately sovereign and in control of human destiny, in what ways are we to do our part to help prepare people's hearts so they will respond positively to the Word of God? (See Acts Principle 35 - In-Depth Evangelism, p. 1420.)



— first the blade, then the head, and then the full grain on the head. ²⁹ As soon as the crop is ready, he sends for the sickle, because the harvest has come."

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

³⁰ And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use to describe it? ³¹ It's like a mustard seed that, when sown upon the soil, is the smallest of all the seeds on the ground. ³² And when sown, it comes up and grows taller than all the garden plants, and produces large branches, so that the birds of the sky can nest in its shade."

USING PARABLES

³³ He was speaking the word to them with many parables like these, as they were able to understand. ³⁴ He did not speak to them without a parable. Privately, however, he explained everything to his own disciples.

MARK PRINCIPLE 7 - GOD'S POWER

We must remember that salvation and spiritual growth are always a supernatural process.

Though God desires to use us to present the gospel and to help others grow spiritually, ultimately he is sovereign and miraculously involved in each person's life. Paul elaborated on what Jesus was teaching:

So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's coworkers. You are God's

field, God's building. (1Co 3:7-9) (See 1 Corinthians Principle 8 - The True Foundation, p. 1470; Matthew Principle 32 - The Ministry of the Spirit, p. 1233.)

Reflection and Response

How do some Christians use this truth to neglect their human responsibility in carrying out the Great Commission outlined so clearly at the end of Matthew's Gospel? (See Matthew Principle 59 - The Great Commission, p. 1259.)



WIND AND WAVES OBEY JESUS

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he told them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the sea." ³⁶ So they left the crowd and took him along since he was in the boat. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸ He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher! Don't you care that we're going to die?"

³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Silence! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ Then he said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹ And they were terrified^A and asked one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

^A4:41 Or were filled with awe

MARK PRINCIPLE 8 - TRUSTING GOD

Regardless of the challenges we face as Christians, we are to trust God to deliver us.

This was a pivotal moment in the life of the disciples. A vicious storm was about to send their boat to the bottom of the sea. When they awakened Jesus—who was sound asleep—he asked two penetrating questions: “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (v. 40). At this point in time, they clearly did not understand who Jesus Christ was. (See *Matthew Principle 22 - The God-Man*, p. 1225.)

Even though God is all-powerful, he has never promised to protect us from all environmental catastrophes or even from deadly attacks on our lives by those who hate the message of Christ. However, he has promised to never leave us or to forsake us (Heb 13:5-6).



He has assured us that nothing can happen to us that has escaped his attention or gone beyond his loving supervision (Mt 10:29-31). As our omniscient (all-knowing) God, he is never asleep, even though we may at times be tempted to think he is ignoring our painful experiences.

Paul captured this great truth when he wrote to the Philippians. Bound in chains, he knew he would be delivered—“whether by life or by death” (Php 1:19-21). Either way, he would be free. (See *Philippians Principle 4 - Eternal Values*, p. 1534.)

Reflection and Response

How does the Old Testament story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego illustrate this principle? (See *Daniel Principle 6 - Facing Persecution*, p. 1080.)

DEMONS DRIVEN OUT BY JESUS

5 They came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes.^A ² As soon as he got out of the boat, a man with an unclean spirit came out of the tombs and met him. ³ He lived in the tombs, and no one was able to restrain him anymore — not even with a chain — ⁴ because he often had been bound with shackles and chains, but had torn the chains apart and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.

⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and knelt down before him. ⁷ And he cried out with a loud voice, “What do you have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you before God, don’t torment me!” ⁸ For he had told him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”

⁹ “What is your name?” he asked him.

“My name is Legion,” he answered him, “because we are many.” ¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the region.

¹¹ A large herd of pigs was there, feeding on the hillside. ¹² The demons^B begged him, “Send us to the pigs, so that we may enter them.” ¹³ So he gave them permission, and the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs. The herd of about two thousand rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned there.

¹⁴ The men who tended them^C ran off and reported it in the town and the countryside, and people went to see what had happened. ¹⁵ They came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

¹⁶ Those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and told about the pigs. ¹⁷ Then they began to beg him to leave their region.

¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged him earnestly that he might remain with him. ¹⁹ Jesus did not let him but told him, “Go home to your own people, and report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.” ²⁰ So he went out and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and they were all amazed.

MARK PRINCIPLE 9 - SHARING CHRIST’S LOVE

When we experience deliverance from the penalty of sin, we are to openly share our experiences with family and friends.

Jesus’s instructions to this man to share this experience with his family and friends did not contradict his instructions to be silent on other occasions. In those cases he was, for the most part, ministering in Jewish communities. He knew people would congregate from everywhere, making it difficult for him to continue (1:44-45; 5:43; 7:36). Based on Old Testament prophecies, some would attempt to make Jesus their king, which was



not why he came the first time (Jn 6:15). Also, his enemies would attempt to take his life before it was time to die on the cross for the sins of the world (Mk 9:30-31; Jn 7:1).

Ultimately, however, Jesus’s commission to all true believers—both Jews and Gentiles—would be to help communicate to everyone the good news of salvation regarding his death and resurrection. He does not want “any to perish but all to come to repentance” (2Pt 3:9).

Reflection and Response

Why is it often difficult to have an effective witness to those who know us best?

^A5:1 Some mss read *Gadarenes*; other mss read *Gergesenes* ^B5:12 Other mss read *All the demons* ^C5:14 Other mss read *tended the pigs*

A GIRL RESTORED AND A WOMAN HEALED

²¹ When Jesus had crossed over again by boat^A to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the sea. ²² One of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet ²³ and begged him earnestly, “My little daughter is dying. Come and lay your hands on her so that she can get well^B and live.” ²⁴ So Jesus went with him, and a large crowd was following and pressing against him.

²⁵ Now a woman suffering from bleeding for twelve years ²⁶ had endured much under many doctors. She had spent everything she had and was not helped at all. On the contrary, she became worse. ²⁷ Having heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothing. ²⁸ For she said, “If I just touch his clothes, I’ll be made well.” ²⁹ Instantly her flow of blood ceased, and she sensed in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized in himself that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?”

³¹ His disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing against you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’”

³² But he was looking around to see who had done this. ³³ The woman, with fear and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ “Daughter,” he said to her, “your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be healed from your affliction.”

³⁵ While he was still speaking, people came from the synagogue leader’s house and said, “Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher anymore?”

³⁶ When Jesus overheard^C what was said, he told the synagogue leader, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe.”

³⁷ He did not let anyone accompany him except Peter, James, and John, James’s brother. ³⁸ They came to the leader’s house, and he saw a commotion — people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep.” ⁴⁰ They laughed at him, but he put them all outside. He took the child’s father, mother, and those who were with him, and entered the place where the child was. ⁴¹ Then he took

the child by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha koum*”^D (which is translated, “Little girl, I say to you, get up”).

⁴² Immediately the girl got up and began to walk. (She was twelve years old.) At this they were utterly astounded. ⁴³ Then he gave them strict orders that no one should know about this and told them to give her something to eat.

■ [Matthew Principle 25 - Good Shepherds, p. 1227.](#)

REJECTION AT NAZARETH

6 He left there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. “Where did this man get these things?” they said. “What is this wisdom that has been given to him, and how are these miracles performed by his hands?” ³ Isn’t this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And aren’t his sisters here with us?” So they were offended by him.

⁴ Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his household.” ⁵ He was not able to do a miracle there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And he was amazed at their unbelief. **He was going around the villages teaching.**

■ [Matthew Principle 34 - Rejection, p. 1235.](#)

■ [John Principle 15 - Family Tensions, p. 1358.](#)

COMMISSIONING THE TWELVE

⁷ He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs and gave them authority over unclean spirits. ⁸ He instructed them to take nothing for the road except a staff — no bread, no traveling bag, no money in their belts, ⁹ but to wear sandals and not put on an extra shirt. ¹⁰ He said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that place. ¹¹ If any place does not welcome you or listen to you, when you leave there, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”^E ¹² So they went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³ They drove out many demons, anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

MARK PRINCIPLE 10 - EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**To be adequately equipped to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to learn from experience.**

In Matthew’s account of Jesus’s sending out the Twelve, we focused on the necessity of equipping others. In Mark’s account, we can focus on how to do so. (See [Matthew Principle 26 - Equipping Leaders, p. 1228.](#))

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus demonstrated that we need more than head knowledge to develop life skills. Here he sent the apostles out on what might be

characterized as a short-term mission trip. This was centuries before prominent educators discovered that our greatest learning takes place in the context of experience, both positive and negative.

Once Jesus had returned to heaven, the results of this approach in equipping these men for ministry became obvious even to those who rejected their message. Luke recorded the response of the rulers and elders in Israel: ►

^A5:21 Other mss omit *by boat* ^B5:23 Or *she might be saved* ^C5:36 Or *ignored* ^D5:41 An Aramaic expression ^E6:11 Other mss add *Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom or Gomorrah on judgment day than for that town.*



▶ *When they observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and recognized that they had been with Jesus. (Ac 4:13)*

Reflection and Response

As you reflect on your most significant learning experiences, what characterized those events?

JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED

¹⁴ King Herod heard about it, because Jesus's name had become well known. Some^A said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that's why miraculous powers are at work in him." ¹⁵ But others said, "He's Elijah." Still others said, "He's a prophet, like one of the prophets from long ago."

¹⁶ When Herod heard of it, he said, "John, the one I beheaded, has been raised!"

¹⁷ For Herod himself had given orders to arrest John and to chain him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. ¹⁸ John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ So Herodias held a grudge against him and wanted to kill him. But she could not, ²⁰ because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing he was a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard him he would be very perplexed,^B and yet he liked to listen to him.

²¹ An opportune time came on his birthday, when Herod gave a banquet for his nobles, military com-

manders, and the leading men of Galilee. ²² When Herodias's own daughter^C came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I'll give it to you." ²³ He promised her with an oath: "Whatever you ask me I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

²⁴ She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?"

"John the Baptist's head," she said.

²⁵ At once she hurried to the king and said, "I want you to give me John the Baptist's head on a platter immediately." ²⁶ Although the king was deeply distressed, because of his oaths and the guests^D he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ The king immediately sent for an executioner and commanded him to bring John's head. So he went and beheaded him in prison, ²⁸ brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When John's disciples heard about it, they came and removed his corpse and placed it in a tomb.

MARK PRINCIPLE 11 - THE POWER OF PRIDE

When we create embarrassing situations for ourselves, we must avoid protecting our pride by engaging in actions that we know are wrong. (See Matthew Principle 35 - Sexual Sins, p. 1236.)

In Matthew's Gospel we focused on the motivating power of sexual lust. Here we develop a related principle: doing things we know are wrong in order to keep from embarrassing ourselves.



King Herod knew John the Baptist was an honorable and upright man, even

though the evangelist had confronted him with his immorality. However, because Herod made a stupid commitment in front of his guests, rather than humbling himself and admitting it, he made the terrible decision to take John's life.

Reflection and Response

Can you think of times your pride drove you to do things you knew were wrong?

FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest for a while." For many people were coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

³² So they went away in the boat by themselves to a remote place, ³³ but many saw them leaving and recognized them, and they ran on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.^E

³⁴ When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like

sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things.

³⁵ When it grew late, his disciples approached him and said, "This place is deserted, and it is already late. ³⁶ Send them away so that they can go into the surrounding countryside and villages to buy themselves something to eat."

³⁷ "You give them something to eat," he responded.

They said to him, "Should we go and buy two hundred denarii^F worth of bread and give them something to eat?"

³⁸ He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see."

^A6:14 Other mss read *He* ^B6:20 Other mss read *When he heard him, he did many things* ^C6:22 Other mss read *When his daughter Herodias*
^D6:26 Lit and those reclining at the table ^E6:33 Other mss add and gathered around him ^F6:37 A denarius = one day's wage

When they found out they said, “Five, and two fish.”³⁹ Then he instructed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass.⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.⁴¹ He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke the loaves. He kept giving them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all.⁴² Everyone ate and was satisfied.⁴³ They picked up twelve baskets full of pieces of bread and fish.⁴⁴ Now those who had eaten the loaves were five thousand men.

WALKING ON THE WATER

⁴⁵ Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, to Bethsaida,

while he dismissed the crowd.⁴⁶ After he said goodbye to them, he went away to the mountain to pray.⁴⁷ Well into the night, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and he was alone on the land.⁴⁸ He saw them straining at the oars,⁴⁹ because the wind was against them. Very early in the morning⁵⁰ he came toward them walking on the sea and wanted to pass by them.⁵¹ When they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out,⁵² because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke with them and said, “Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”⁵³ Then he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. They were completely astounded,⁵⁴ because they had not understood about the loaves. Instead, their hearts were hardened.

MARK PRINCIPLE 12 - PUTTING OTHERS FIRST

Even though we need time to rest, we must be prepared to meet the needs of people who interrupt our schedules.

There is a significant human element in these two miraculous events. Jesus and his disciples needed time away in order to recuperate. However, people were waiting for them when they arrived in what was to be a private place (v. 33). In spite of his own tiredness, Jesus once again had compassion on these people. However, the disciples seemed frustrated and angry. Why couldn’t Jesus just send these people away (v. 36)?

The disciples needed to learn to have compassion on people who were spiritually and physically in need. Instead, they allowed their own human needs to harden their hearts (v. 52). (See [Matthew Principle 36 - The Whole Person](#), p. 1236; [John Principle 13 - God’s Personal Concern](#), p. 1356.) Knowing their struggle and resentment, Jesus insisted that they get in a boat by themselves and return to the other side of the lake. He then spent time in prayer alone.

In the meantime, a storm arose. When they were in deep distress, Jesus came “walking on the sea” but purposely “wanted to pass by them.” It appears he wanted to let them continue to fend for themselves in

order to recognize and deal with their own deep needs (Mk 6:48). This was a teachable moment. To help them understand they must not allow the pressures of other people’s needs to cause resentment, he demonstrated compassion toward them and rescued them.

Rest, relaxation, and recuperation are necessary. However, there are times when we must change our plans so we can meet the needs of others. Though we may be frustrated and even resentful at times, we are not to become bitter. We are to imitate the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ (Php 2:5). Paul wrote,

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Php 2:3-4) (See [Philippians Principle 5 - Mutual Support](#), p. 1535; [Philippians Principle 6 - Imitating Christ](#), p. 1535.)

Reflection and Response

How can we keep this principle in balance—meeting the needs of others while also taking time to meet our own needs and the needs of our families? (See [Leviticus Principle 16 - Times of Rest](#), p. 149.)



MIRACULOUS HEALINGS

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they came to shore at Gennesaret and anchored there.

⁵⁴ As they got out of the boat, people immediately recognized him.⁵⁵ They hurried throughout that region and began to carry the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.⁵⁶ Wherever he went, into villages, towns, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch just the end of his robe. And everyone who touched it was healed.

THE TRADITIONS OF THE ELDERS

7 The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him.² They observed that some of his disciples were eating bread with unclean — that is, unwashed — hands.³ (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, keeping the tradition of the elders.⁴ When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they have washed. And there are many other customs they have received and keep, like the washing of cups, pitchers, kettles, and dining couches.)⁵ So the Pharisees and the scribes

^a 6:48 Or *them being battered as they rowed* ^b 6:48 Lit *Around the fourth watch of the night* = 3 to 6 a.m. ^c 7:4 Other mss omit *and dining couches*

asked him, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders, instead of eating bread with ceremonially unclean^A hands?”

⁶ He answered them, “Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites, as it is written:

**This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me.**

⁷ **They worship me in vain,**

teaching as doctrines human commands.^B

⁸ Abandoning the command of God, you hold on to human tradition.”^C ⁹ He also said to them, “You have

a fine way of invalidating God’s command in order to set up^D your tradition!¹⁰ For Moses said: **Honor your father and your mother;^E** and **Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death.^F**¹¹ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or mother: What- ever benefit you might have received from me is *corban*’” (that is, an offering devoted to God),¹² “you no longer let him do anything for his father or moth- er.¹³ You nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many other similar things.”

MARK PRINCIPLE 13 - TRUTH AND TRADITIONS

When we develop traditions, we must make sure that they are in harmony with God’s truth in Scripture.

Traditions in themselves are not wrong. However, the Pharisees’ *corban* tradition permitted people to formally dedicate their money to the temple, yet retain it for their own use. This freed them up from caring for their parents while allowing them to use their resources for their own

selfish desires. This was a perversion of the system of tithes and offerings prescribed for the upkeep of the temple (Ex 35:4-5; 2Kg 12:4-5), and it contradicted the fifth commandment (Ex 20:12).



Some ways of doing God’s work have stood the test of time. However, the moment traditions become abso- lute and, worse yet, out of harmony with biblical truth, we must be willing to change our traditions in order to be both biblical and relevant in our culture. (See *Mat- thew Principle 29 - Inappropriate Traditions*, p. 1230.)

Reflection and Response

How can we make sure that traditions remain flexible and always in harmony with Scriptural truth?

¹⁴ Summoning the crowd again, he told them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ Nothing that goes into a person from outside can defile him but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.”^G

¹⁷ When he went into the house away from the crowd, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸ He said to them, “Are you also as lacking in understand- ing? Don’t you realize that nothing going into a person from the outside can defile him? ¹⁹ For it doesn’t go into his heart but into the stomach and is eliminat- ed” (thus he declared all foods clean^H). ²⁰ And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of people’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, ²² adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, self-indulgence, envy,^I slan- der, pride, and foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within and defile a person.”

■ *Matthew Principle 38 - True Spirituality*, p. 1238.

A GENTILE MOTHER’S FAITH

²⁴ He got up and departed from there to the region of Tyre.^J He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it, but he could not escape notice. ²⁵ Instead, im- mediately after hearing about him, a woman whose lit- tle daughter had an unclean spirit came and fell at his

feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Gentile,^K a Syrophenician by birth, and she was asking him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, because it isn’t right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

²⁸ But she replied to him, “Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

²⁹ Then he told her, “Because of this reply, you may go. The demon has left your daughter.”³⁰ When she went back to her home, she found her child lying on the bed, and the demon was gone.

JESUS DOES EVERYTHING WELL

³¹ Again, leaving the region of Tyre, he went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through^L the region of the Decapolis. ³² They brought to him a deaf man who had difficulty speaking and begged Jesus to lay his hand on him. ³³ So he took him away from the crowd in private. After putting his fingers in the man’s ears and spitting, he touched his tongue. ³⁴ Looking up to heaven, he sighed deeply and said to him, “*Ephphatha!*”^M (that is, “Be opened!”). ³⁵ Immedi- ately his ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak clearly. ³⁶ He ordered them to tell no one, but the more he ordered them, the more they proclaimed it.

^A7:5 Other mss read *with unwashed* ^B7:6-7 Is 29:13 ^C7:8 Other mss add *The washing of jugs, and cups, and many other similar things you practice.*

^D7:9 Or *to maintain* ^E7:10 Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16 ^F7:10 Ex 21:17; Lv 20:9 ^G7:15 Some mss include v. 16: “If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen.”

^H7:19 Other mss read *is eliminated, making all foods clean* ^I7:22 Or *evil eye* ^J7:24 Many early mss add *and Sidon* ^K7:26 Or *a Greek (speaker)*

^L7:31 Or *into* ^M7:34 An Aramaic expression

³⁷ They were extremely astonished and said, “He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

■ [Matthew Principle 39 - Reaching Gentiles, p. 1238.](#)

FEEDING FOUR THOUSAND

8 In those days there was again a large crowd, and they had nothing to eat. He called the disciples and said to them, ² “I have compassion on the crowd, because they’ve already stayed with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, and some of them have come a long distance.”

⁴ His disciples answered him, “Where can anyone get enough bread here in this desolate place to feed these people?”

⁵ “How many loaves do you have?” he asked them.

“Seven,” they said. ⁶ He commanded the crowd to sit down on the ground. Taking the seven loaves, he gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people. So they served them to the crowd. ⁷ They also had a few small fish, and after he had blessed them, he said these were to be served as well. ⁸ They ate and were satisfied. Then they collected seven large baskets of leftover pieces. ⁹ About four thousand were there. He dismissed them. ¹⁰ And he immediately got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES AND HEROD

¹¹ The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, demanding of him a sign from heaven to test him. ¹² Sighing deeply in his spirit, he said, “Why does this generation demand a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation.” ¹³ Then he left them, got back into the boat, and went to the other side.

¹⁴ The disciples had forgotten to take bread and had only one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵ Then he gave them strict orders: “Watch out! Beware of the leaven^A of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” ¹⁶ They were discussing among themselves that they did not have any bread. ¹⁷ Aware of this, he said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact you have no bread? Don’t you understand or comprehend? Do you have hardened hearts? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes and not see; do you have ears and not hear?^B And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of leftovers did you collect?”

“Twelve,” they told him.

²⁰ “When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you collect?”

“Seven,” they said.

²¹ And he said to them, “Don’t you understand yet?”

MARK PRINCIPLE 14 - REMEMBERING GOD’S GRACE

When we face various crises in our lives, we must not forget how God has cared for us in the past.

When the disciples were discussing their lack of food (v. 16), it reveals how human they were. How could they have forgotten when Jesus twice multiplied the loaves for thousands of men, women, and children? Furthermore, Jesus met their own needs when he delivered them from the storm (6:51). And now they were worried about food.

How quickly we forget God’s blessings in our lives!

Reflection and Response

What are some practical things we can do to help us remember God’s past blessings in our lives—especially when these special blessings relate to present crises?



HEALING A BLIND MAN

²² They came to Bethsaida. They brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and brought him out of the village. Spitting on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?”

²⁴ He looked up and said, “I see people — they look like trees walking.”

²⁵ Again Jesus placed his hands on the man’s eyes. The man looked intently and his sight was restored and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ Then he sent him home, saying, “Don’t even go into the village.”^C

PETER’S CONFESSION OF THE MESSIAH

²⁷ Jesus went out with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the road he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”

²⁸ They answered him, “John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, one of the prophets.”

²⁹ “But you,” he asked them, “who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” ³⁰ And he strictly warned them to tell no one about him.

HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION PREDICTED

³¹ Then he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days. ³² He spoke openly about this. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning around and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! You are not thinking about God’s concerns^D but human concerns.”

^A 8:15 Or yeast ■ 8:18 Jr 5:21; Ezk 12:2 ■ 8:26 Other mss add or tell anyone in the village ■ 8:33 Or about the things of God

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

³⁴ Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it.

³⁶ For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life? ³⁷ What can anyone give in exchange for his life? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

MARK PRINCIPLE 15 - PURE MOTIVES

Even though we may be dedicated Christians, we must make sure our motives are to honor God and not ourselves.

Matthew focused on Satan’s efforts to influence our lives, even when we know who Jesus Christ really is—the Son of God and the Messiah (v. 29; see Mt 16:16).

(See [Matthew Principle 41 - Satanic Influences](#), p. 1240.)



We also need to remember that this evil influence can be very subtle, causing us to think we are honoring God when in reality

we are motivated by our own selfish interests. This is a difficult distinction since we are human and all of us have personal needs, even the need to be honored (Rm 12:10). However, the Scriptures are clear—we are to honor God above all that we esteem and in all that we do:

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. (1Co 10:31)

Reflection and Response

What are some subtle ways Satan tries to cause us to honor ourselves above God and others?

9 Then he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God come in power.”

you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” — ⁶ because he did not know what to say, since they were terrified.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

² After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain by themselves to be alone. He was transfigured in front of them, ³ and his clothes became dazzling — extremely white as no launderer on earth could whiten them. ⁴ Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it’s good for us to be here. Let us set up three shelters: one for

⁷ A cloud appeared, overshadowing them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my beloved Son; listen to him!”

⁸ Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ They kept this word to themselves, questioning what “rising from the dead” meant.

MARK PRINCIPLE 16 - CHRIST’S AUTHORITY

In a world that is permeated with many religious and philosophical messages, we must discern truth from error by listening carefully to the words of Jesus Christ.

Though Matthew, Mark, and Luke record Christ’s glorious transfiguration, each account has given us a unique principle. Matthew’s focus helps all Christians to serve God faithfully despite unanswered questions. Luke’s account challenges us to be alert and self-disciplined. Mark encourages us to listen to Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate. (See [Matthew Principle 42 - Serving Faithfully](#), p. 1241; [Luke Principle 16 - Spiritual Disciplines](#), p. 1311.)

The transfiguration was a preview of the glorious second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to rule and reign on earth. However, God the Father’s response to Peter’s frightened and superficial question yields a powerful principle that focuses on who Jesus really is—past, present, and future. Peter identified the

Savior with the title “Rabbi” (v. 5). Jesus was indeed an esteemed and great teacher—the actual meaning of the title “Rabbi”—however, he is also God’s “beloved Son” (v. 7), the “Word” who “became flesh” (Jn 1:14). Since the “Word was God” (Jn 1:1), to listen to Jesus is to listen to God! A short time before his death, Jesus made this point clear in his intimate conversation with Philip:

“Lord,” said Philip, “show us the Father, and that’s enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves. (Jn 14:8-11) (See [John Principle 2 - The Deity of Christ](#), p. 1347.) ▶



► Reflection and Response

How does the author of Hebrews verify the importance of Christ's authority? (See Hebrews Principle 1 - The Person of Christ, p. 1599.)

¹¹ Then they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

¹² "Elijah does come first and restores all things," he replied. "Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³ But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did whatever they pleased to him, just as it is written about him."

THE POWER OF FAITH OVER A DEMON

¹⁴ When they came to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and scribes disputing with them.

¹⁵ When the whole crowd saw him, they were amazed and ran to greet him. ¹⁶ He asked them, "What are you arguing with them about?"

¹⁷ Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you. He has a spirit that makes him unable to speak. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive it out, but they couldn't."

¹⁹ He replied to them, "You unbelieving generation, how long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him to me." ²⁰ So they brought the boy

to him. When the spirit saw him, it immediately threw the boy into convulsions. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. ²¹ "How long has this been happening to him?" Jesus asked his father.

"From childhood," he said. ²² "And many times it has thrown him into fire or water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

²³ Jesus said to him, "If you can?"^A Everything is possible for the one who believes."

²⁴ Immediately the father of the boy cried out, "I do believe; help my unbelief!"

²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was quickly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you: Come out of him and never enter him again."

²⁶ Then it came out, shrieking and throwing him^B into terrible convulsions. The boy became like a corpse, so that many said, "He's dead." ²⁷ But Jesus, taking him by the hand, raised him, and he stood up.

²⁸ After he had gone into the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

²⁹ And he told them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer."^C

MARK PRINCIPLE 17 - THE OBJECT OF FAITH

To experience a growing faith, we must believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is God, and that he is able to do anything he wishes.

A key in verifying this principle is the twice-spoken phrase "if you can" (vv. 22-23). Though Mark's sentence structure is puzzling, it seems that Jesus was admonishing the man for using a phrase that suggested doubt. Because of who he is, Jesus could choose to honor this man's faith and heal his son.

Does this imply Jesus could not heal apart from this man's faith? If that were true, many of Jesus's miraculous healings would not have happened. Often Jesus healed whether there was faith or not. However, Jesus wanted this man, along with all those who were watching, to understand that he is indeed the Son of God and one with the Father. Though he was human, he was fully divine. This was one of Mark's purposes in writing this Gospel record.

In many respects Mark's record of this man's struggle with doubt is a vignette of the Gospel of John. John summarized his purpose for writing:

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (Jn 20:30-31) (See John Principle 39 - The Power of Scripture, p. 1382.)

In John's Gospel, people often said they believed in Jesus Christ and yet had not fully believed (cp. Jn 2:11 with 2:22). Similarly, the father of the demon-possessed boy confessed, "I do believe; help my unbelief!" (Mk 9:24).

Reflection and Response

When we pray for healing, either in our lives or in the lives of others, how does this faith principle apply, especially since we do not know God's perfect will regarding physical restoration? (See Matthew Principle 21 - Physical Healing, p. 1224; 1 John Principle 16 - Effective Prayer, p. 1655.)



THE SECOND PREDICTION OF HIS DEATH

³⁰ Then they left that place and made their way through Galilee, but he did not want anyone to know it. ³¹ For he was teaching his disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed^A into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after he is killed, he will rise three days later.” ³² But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask him.

WHO IS THE GREATEST?

³³ They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” ³⁴ But they were silent, because on the way they had been arguing with one another about who was the greatest. ³⁵ Sitting down, he called the Twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be last

and servant of all.” ³⁶ He took a child, had him stand among them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever welcomes^B one little child such as this in my name welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but him who sent me.”

■ [Matthew Principle 47 - Servant Leadership, p. 1245.](#)

IN HIS NAME

³⁸ John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone^C driving out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he wasn’t following us.”

³⁹ “Don’t stop him,” said Jesus, “because there is no one who will perform a miracle in my name who can soon afterward speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ For whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ And whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ — truly I tell you, he will never lose his reward.

MARK PRINCIPLE 18 - NONJUDGMENTAL ATTITUDES

Even though there are various opinions among Bible-believing Christians, we are to demonstrate love and acceptance of one another.

It appears the main reason John was trying to stop this worker was that he wasn’t a part of their little group. Therefore, Jesus’s response should impact all Christians who are reclusive and judgmental of others simply because they don’t belong to their particular group. Paul applied this principle in an unusual way when he was imprisoned in Rome:

Most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the word fearlessly. To be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. These preach out of love, knowing that I am



appointed for the defense of the gospel; the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment. What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice. (Php 1:14-18) (See [Philippians Principle 3 - The Pure Gospel, p. 1534.](#))

Reflection and Response

Besides belief in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, what are some other doctrinal issues we must consider before we should endorse other Christian ministries? (See 1 John Principle 7 - False Apostles and Prophets, p. 1650.)

WARNINGS FROM JESUS

⁴² “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall away — it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

⁴³ “And if your hand causes you to fall away, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and go to hell, the unquenchable fire. ⁴⁴ And if your foot causes you to fall away, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ⁴⁵ And if your eye causes you to fall away, gouge it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁶ where **their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.** ⁴⁷

⁴⁸ For everyone will be salted with fire. ⁴⁹ Salt is good, but if the salt should lose its flavor, how can

you season it? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

THE QUESTION OF DIVORCE

10 He set out from there and went to the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Then crowds converged on him again, and as was his custom he taught them again.

² Some Pharisees came to test him, asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”

³ He replied to them, “What did Moses command you?”

⁴ They said, “Moses permitted us to write divorce papers and send her away.”

⁵ But Jesus told them, “He wrote this command for you because of the hardness of your hearts. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation God **made them male and**

^A9:31 Or handed over ^B9:37 Or “Whoever receives ^C9:38 Other mss add who didn’t go along with us ^D9:43 Some mss include v. 44: Where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. ^E9:45 Some mss include v. 46: Where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. ^F9:48 Is 66:24 ^G9:49 Other mss add and every sacrifice will be salted with salt ^H9:49 Lv 2:13; Ezk 43:24 ^I10:6 Other mss omit God

female.^a ⁷ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother^b and the two will become one flesh.^c So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

¹⁰ When they were in the house again, the disciples questioned him about this matter. ¹¹ He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. ¹² Also, if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

- Malachi Principle 3 - Marital Faithfulness, p. 1201.
- Matthew Principle 44 - Standing Firm, p. 1243.

BLESSING THE CHILDREN

¹³ People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me. Don’t stop them, because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive^d the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” ¹⁶ After taking them in his arms, he laid his hands on them and blessed them.

MARK PRINCIPLE 19 - THE YOUNGER GENERATION

Whether in the family or in the church, we are to do all we can to meet the needs of children.

The Greek term in these verses was used to describe children from birth to age twelve (5:39,42). Here Jesus was referring to small children he could take “in his arms” (10:16). When the disciples rebuked the children’s parents for bringing them to Jesus, Mark described Jesus’s reaction as indignation (v. 14). Evidently, the disciples had missed the point earlier when Jesus placed a child in their midst and later

took the same child in his arms: “Whoever welcomes one little child such as this in my name welcomes me” (9:36-37).

Reflection and Response

In what specific ways should we apply this Principle to Live By when we are making decisions, both in our biological families as well as in the larger believing family—namely, the local church?



THE RICH YOUNG RULER

¹⁷ As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁸ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked him. “No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: **Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not defraud; honor your father and mother.**”^e

²⁰ He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these from my youth.”

²¹ Looking at him, Jesus loved him and said to him, “You lack one thing: Go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come,^f follow me.” ²² But he was dismayed by this demand, and he went away grieving, because he had many possessions.

POSSESSIONS AND THE KINGDOM

²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”

²⁴ The disciples were astonished at his words. Again Jesus said to them, “Children, how hard it is^g to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶ They were even more astonished, saying to one another, “Then who can be saved?”

²⁷ Looking at them, Jesus said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God, because all things are possible with God.”

²⁸ Peter began to tell him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.”

²⁹ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said, “there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father^h or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundred times more, now at this time — houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions — and eternal life in the age to come. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

MARK PRINCIPLE 20 - MATERIAL POSSESSIONS

If we are blessed with wealth, we must realize that money will never enable us to inherit eternal life.

In Matthew’s account, we focused on establishing proper priorities. We’re always to “seek first the king-

dom of God and his righteousness” and then to trust the Lord to provide the material things we need (Mt 6:33). (See Matthew Principle 15 - Eternal Treasures, p. 1221; Matthew Principle 45 - Biblical Priorities, p. 1244.) ▶

^a10:6 Gn 1:27; 5:2 ^b10:7 Some mss add *and be joined to his wife* ^c10:7-8 Gn 2:24 ^d10:15 Or *not welcome* ^e10:19 Ex 20:12-16; Dt 5:16-20 ^f10:21 Other mss add *taking up the cross, and* ^g10:24 Other mss add *for those trusting in wealth* ^h10:29 Other mss add *or wife*

► Here in Mark, it's clear that no one can be saved—rich or poor—apart from God's grace. It is impossible to inherit eternal life by doing good works. Wealthy people might easily conclude that if they simply share some of what they have with the needy, they will gain merit with God with regard to salvation. But they would be



mistaken; all people are saved by grace through faith. (See [Ephesians Principle 4 - God's Gift](#), p. 1523.)

This reality is difficult for some rich people to comprehend, especially since

many have used money to get what they want. They may have bought their way into economic, social, political, and even religious prominence, but even the wealthiest in the world cannot buy their way into heaven. Nevertheless, anyone can be saved if they put their faith in God. The Bible gives us numerous examples.

Reflection and Response

[How does the story of the Ethiopian official illustrate that wealthy people can be saved? \(See \[Acts Principle 16 - Biblical Evidence\]\(#\), p. 1402.\)](#)

THE THIRD PREDICTION OF HIS DEATH

³²They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were astonished, but those who followed him were afraid. Taking the Twelve aside again, he began to tell them the things that would happen to him. ³³"See, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death. Then they will hand him over to the Gentiles, ³⁴and they will mock him, spit on him, flog^A him, and kill him, and he will rise after three days."

SUFFERING AND SERVICE

³⁵James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him and said, "Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask you."

³⁶"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked them.

³⁷They answered him, "Allow us to sit at your right and at your left in your glory."

³⁸Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup I drink or to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

³⁹"We are able," they told him.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink, and you will be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with. ⁴⁰But to sit at my right or left is not mine to give; instead, it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

⁴¹When the ten disciples heard this, they began to be indignant with James and John. ⁴²Jesus called them over and said to them, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. ⁴³But it is not so among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."^B

MARK PRINCIPLE 21 - MODELING CHRIST'S LIKENESS

Parents are to model servant leadership to their children.

Matthew and Mark have given us different perspectives on this event. Matthew stated that it was the mother of James and John who approached Jesus (Mt 20:21), while Mark recorded that James and John spoke for themselves (Mk 10:37). Both Gospel writers were describing the same event that involved two separate conversations. Salome probably approached Jesus first, then James and John made their bold entrance a few minutes later and asked the same preplanned questions. As with Rebekah and her son Jacob, this was a family scheme (Gn 27:1-20; see 1Kg 1:13-14). (See [Matthew Principle 47 - Servant Leadership](#), p. 1245.)

These two bombastic brothers were likely in some respects a reflection of their parents. Though we know little about Zebedee, except that he owned a large fishing business, we can speculate that he and his wife were not positive examples of servanthood. Jesus knew this family well, even calling these



brothers "Sons of Thunder" when he chose them to be apostles (Mk 3:17).

The good news is that eventually James and John became two of the greatest servants in the New Testament story. James was miraculously and marvelously transformed from a man who thought only of himself and his family into a dynamic and steadfast Christian who was willing to give his life for the one who gave his life for him (Ac 12:1-2). Though John lived to be an old man, he came to be known as the apostle of love. He recorded Jesus's command to "love one another" (Jn 13:34-35) and, nearly sixty years after the event, reiterated it five times in his first letter (1Jn 3:11,23; 4:7,11-12; see 3:16). In addition, he used the word "love" forty times in his other literature. (See [1 John Principle 10 - Loving as Christ Loved](#), p. 1652.)

Reflection and Response

[How can parents model servant leadership for their children and, at the same time, build their children's self-esteem?](#)

A BLIND MAN HEALED

⁴⁶They came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁸Many warned him to keep quiet, but he was crying out all the more, “Have mercy on me, Son of David!”

⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So they called the blind man and said to him, “Have courage! Get up; he’s calling for you.” ⁵⁰He threw off his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

⁵¹Then Jesus answered him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

“*Rabboni*,”^A the blind man said to him, “I want to see.”

⁵²Jesus said to him, “Go, your faith has saved you.” Immediately he could see and began to follow Jesus on the road.

■ [Matthew Principle 48 - Personal Interest, p. 1246.](#)

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

11 When they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples² and told them, “Go into the village ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it.³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here right away.’”

⁴So they went and found a colt outside in the street, tied by a door. They untied it,⁵ and some of those standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?”⁶ They answered them just as Jesus had said; so they let them go.

⁷They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and he sat on it.⁸ Many people spread their clothes on the road, and others spread leafy branches cut from the fields.⁸⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted:

Hosanna!

**Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord!^C**

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom
of our father David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!

¹¹He went into Jerusalem and into the temple. After looking around at everything, since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

■ [Zechariah Principle 8 - A Humble Servant, p. 1192.](#)

THE BARREN FIG TREE IS CURSED

¹²The next day when they went out from Bethany, he was hungry.¹³ Seeing in the distance a fig tree with leaves, he went to find out if there was anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season for figs.¹⁴ He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And his disciples heard it.

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

¹⁵They came to Jerusalem, and he went into the temple and began to throw out those buying and selling. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves,¹⁶ and would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple.¹⁷ He was teaching them: “Is it not written, **My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?**^D But you have made it a den of thieves!”^E

¹⁸The chief priests and the scribes heard it and started looking for a way to kill him. For they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was astonished by his teaching.

¹⁹Whenever evening came, they would go out of the city.

■ [Isaiah Principle 40 - Reflecting Christ’s Character, p. 914.](#)

THE BARREN FIG TREE IS WITHERED

²⁰Early in the morning, as they were passing by, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up.²¹ Then Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.”

MARK PRINCIPLE 22 - BEARING FRUIT

We are to do all we can to develop churches that manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

Jews who were familiar with the prophets knew the fig tree was often mentioned when God passed judgment on Israel (Jr 8:13; 29:17; Hs 9:10; Jl 1:6-7; Mc 7:1-2). Jesus was demonstrating his extreme disappointment in his chosen people. Because of their hardened hearts and meaningless rituals, judgment was coming.

When he cleansed the temple complex (Mk 11:15-16), he was demonstrating that they had desecrated the temple and it was no longer a place where God was

honored. The temple was going to be totally destroyed (13:1-2).

Since we now have God’s revelation in Scripture, we can see beyond these two events. After Israel as a nation rejected the Messiah, God introduced a new entity—the church of Jesus Christ—which included both Jews and Gentiles who received the gift of eternal life (Jn 1:11-13). Believers are God’s living temple designed to reflect the fruit of the Holy Spirit. (See [Ephesians Principle 5 - Oneness in Christ, p. 1523](#); [Ephesians Principle 6 - Servants of the Gospel, p. 1524](#).) ►

^A10:51 Hb word for *my lord* ^B11:8 Other mss read *others were cutting leafy branches from the trees and spreading them on the road* ^C11:9 Ps 118:26
^D11:17 Is 56:7 ^E11:17 Jr 7:11



► Reflection and Response

Why do some churches reflect the same fruitless activities and dead orthodoxy that existed among the children of

Israel? (See Revelation Principle 7 - The True Gospel, p. 1676; Revelation Principle 9 - Receiving Christ, p. 1677.)

²² Jesus replied to them, "Have faith in God. ²³ Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, everything

you pray and ask for — believe that you have received^A it and it will be yours. ²⁵ And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing."^B

MARK PRINCIPLE 23 - BECOMING A HEALTHY CHURCH

To become the church God intends us to be, we must develop our faith, be devoted to prayer, and live in harmony with one another.

When Mark included these elements after Jesus prophesied the rejection of Israel and the destruction of the temple, they may appear to be somewhat out of context. However, a closer and deeper look demonstrates continuity in the biblical story. As believers, we can avoid Israel's

sins that led to a dead orthodoxy by

- developing our faith in the Christ who dwells within us (vv. 22-23; Eph 3:16-17a),
- continuing to "pray at all times in the Spirit" (Mk 11:24; Eph 6:18), and

- "bearing with one another and forgiving one another" (Mk 11:25-26; Col 3:12-13). (See Matthew Principle 13 - Experiencing God's Forgiveness, p. 1220.)

Even though Israel as a nation would be rejected and the temple destroyed, Jesus was here laying the groundwork to provide comfort for his followers. All true believers in the church of Jesus Christ have every divine resource to manifest the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gl 5:22-23).



Reflection and Response

In what ways have you seen these elements at work in your church?

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHALLENGED

²⁷ They came again to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came ²⁸ and asked him, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do these things?"

²⁹ Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; then answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ Was John's baptism from heaven or of human origin? Answer me."

³¹ They discussed it among themselves: "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' ³² But if we say, 'Of human origin' — they were afraid of the crowd, because everyone thought that John was truly a prophet. ³³ So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

- In a similar situation, note the contrast described in John Principle 19 - One with God, p. 1362.

time he sent a servant to the farmers to collect some of the fruit of the vineyard from them. ³ But they took him, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ Again he sent another servant to them, and they^C hit him on the head and treated him shamefully.^D ⁵ Then he sent another, and they killed that one. He also sent many others; some they beat, and others they killed. ⁶ He still had one to send, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, "They will respect my son." ⁷ But those tenant farmers said to one another, "This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." ⁸ So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹ What then will the owner^E of the vineyard do? He will come and kill the farmers and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Haven't you read this Scripture:

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

- ¹¹ **This came about from the Lord and is wonderful in our eyes!"^F**

¹² They were looking for a way to arrest him but feared the crowd because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. So they left him and went away.

- Matthew Principle 49 - Seeking the Truth, p. 1248.

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD OWNER

12 He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug out a pit for a winepress, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and went away. ² At harvest

^A 11:24 Some mss read you receive; other mss read you will receive ^B 11:25 Some mss include v. 26: "But if you don't forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your wrongdoing." ^C 12:4 Other mss add threw stones and ^D 12:4 Other mss add and sent him off ^E 12:9 Or lord ^F 12:10-11 Ps 118:22-23

GOD AND CAESAR

¹³Then they sent some of the Pharisees and the Herodians to Jesus to trap him in his words. ¹⁴When they came, they said to him, “Teacher, we know you are truthful and don’t care what anyone thinks, nor do you show partiality but teach the way of God truthfully. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn’t we?”

¹⁵But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius^A to look at.” ¹⁶They brought a coin. “Whose image and inscription is this?” he asked them.

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

¹⁷Jesus told them, “Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were utterly amazed at him.

THE SADDUCEES AND THE RESURRECTION

¹⁸Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and questioned him: ¹⁹“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife behind but no child, that man should take the wife and raise up offspring for his brother.” ²⁰There were seven brothers. The first married a woman, and dying, left no offspring. ²¹The second also took her, and he died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. ²²None of the seven^C left offspring. Last of all, the woman died too. ²³In the resurrection, when they rise,^D whose wife will she be, since the seven had married her?”

²⁴Jesus spoke to them, “Isn’t this the reason why you’re mistaken: you don’t know the Scriptures or the power of God? ²⁵For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶And as for the dead being raised — haven’t you read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God said to him: **I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?**^E ²⁷He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are badly mistaken.”

THE PRIMARY COMMANDS

²⁸One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, “Which command is the most important of all?”

²⁹Jesus answered, “The most important^F is Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one.^G

³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.^{H,I} ³¹The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself.^J There is no other command greater than these.”

³²Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, teacher. You have correctly said that he is one, and there is no one else except him. ³³And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding,^K and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

³⁴When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And no one dared to question him any longer.

THE QUESTION ABOUT THE CHRIST

³⁵While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he asked, “How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? ³⁶David himself says by the Holy Spirit:

The Lord declared to my Lord,

‘Sit at my right hand

until I put your enemies under your feet.’^L

³⁷David himself calls him ‘Lord’; how then can he be his son?” And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

■ [Matthew Principle 50 - Divine Wisdom, p. 1249.](#)

WARNING AGAINST THE SCRIBES

³⁸He also said in his teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who want to go around in long robes and who want greetings in the marketplaces, ³⁹the best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at banquets.

⁴⁰They devour widows’ houses and say long prayers just for show. These will receive harsher judgment.”

THE WIDOW’S GIFT

⁴¹Sitting across from the temple treasury, he watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. ⁴²Then a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. ⁴³Summoning his disciples, he said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had — all she had to live on.”

MARK PRINCIPLE 24 - TRUE GENEROSITY

When we engage in various worship functions, we are to keep our motives pure.

Jesus drew attention to the poor widow. Giving out of poverty, she even gave away what she needed to meet her own physical needs. By contrast, the religious

leaders, who took advantage of such women (v. 40), gave out of their abundance. Furthermore, they gave to honor themselves (Mt 6:2). (See [Matthew Principle 14 - Honoring God, p. 1220.](#)) ►

^A12:15 A denarius = one day’s wage ^B12:19 Gn 38:8; Dt 25:5 ^C12:22 Other mss add *had taken her and* ^D12:23 Other mss omit *when they rise*
^E12:26 Ex 3:6,15-16 ^F12:29 Other mss add *of all the commands* ^G12:29 *Or the Lord our God is Lord alone.* ^H12:30 Other mss add *This is the first commandment.* ^I12:30 Dt 6:4-5; Jos 22:5 ^J12:31 Lv 19:18 ^K12:33 Other mss add *with all your soul* ^L12:36 Ps 110:1

► This widow's generosity also illustrates what happened in the churches in Macedonia. Though these believers were living in poverty, in God's eyes they were more generous than those living with plenty. Paul honored these believers just as Jesus honored the poor widow:

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that was given to the churches of Macedonia: During a severe trial brought about by affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on



their part. I can testify that, according to their ability and even beyond their ability, of their own accord, they begged us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints, and not just as we had hoped. Instead, they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us by God's will. (2Co 8:1-5) (See 2 Corinthians Principle 12 - Models of Generosity, p. 1499.)

Reflection and Response

What should these two biblical illustrations teach many Christians who live in prosperous cultures?

DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE PREDICTED

13 As he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Teacher, look! What massive stones! What impressive buildings!"

² Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another — all will be thrown down."

SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE

³ While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives across from the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?"

⁵ Jesus told them, "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and they will deceive many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, don't be alarmed; these things must take place, but it is not yet the end. ⁸ For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. ^A These are the beginning of birth pains.

PERSECUTIONS PREDICTED

⁹ "But you, be on your guard! They will hand you over to local courts, ^B and you will be flogged in the synagogues. You will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a witness to them. ¹⁰ And it is necessary that the gospel be preached to all nations. ¹¹ So when they arrest you and hand you over, don't worry beforehand what you will say, but say whatever is given to you at that time, for it isn't you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

¹² "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ You will be hated by everyone because of my name, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

¹⁴ "When you see **the abomination of desolation** ^C standing where it should not be" (let the reader understand), "then those in Judea must flee to the mountains.

¹⁵ A man on the housetop must not come down or go in to get anything out of his house, ¹⁶ and a man in the field must not go back to get his coat. ¹⁷ Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days!

¹⁸ "Pray it ^D won't happen in winter. ¹⁹ For those will be days of tribulation, the kind that hasn't been from the beginning of creation until now and never will be again. ²⁰ If the Lord had not cut those days short, no one would be saved. But he cut those days short for the sake of the elect, whom he chose.

²¹ "Then if anyone tells you, 'See, here is the Messiah! See, there!' do not believe it. ²² For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and will perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ And you must watch! I have told you everything in advance.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

²⁴ "But in those days, after that tribulation: The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light; ²⁵ the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ He will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

- [Matthew Principle 52 - Israel and the Church](#), p. 1251.
- [Revelation Principle 31 - Imminent or Distant](#), p. 1697.

THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

²⁸ "Learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ In the same way, when you see these things happening, recognize ^E that he ^F is near — at the door.

³⁰ "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

NO ONE KNOWS THE DAY OR HOUR

³² "Now concerning that day or hour no one knows — neither the angels in heaven nor the Son — but only the Father.

³³“Watch! Be alert!^A For you don’t know when the time is coming.

³⁴“It is like a man on a journey, who left his house, gave authority to his servants, gave each one his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to be alert. ³⁵Therefore be alert, since you don’t know when the master

of the house is coming — whether in the evening or at midnight or at the crowing of the rooster or early in the morning. ³⁶Otherwise, when he comes suddenly he might find you sleeping. ³⁷And what I say to you, I say to everyone: Be alert!”

MARK PRINCIPLE 25 - ALERTNESS WITHOUT SPECIFICITY

Though God wants us always to be ready for Christ’s coming to remove the church from this earth, we are not to set specific dates.

Nowhere in these paragraphs are there specific references to what we call the “rapture.” We do know it will happen before Christ returns to set up his kingdom. But just as we do not know the “day” or the “hour” (v. 32) when people “will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory” (v. 26), likewise, we do not know the day or the hour when all true believers—both those who have died and those

who are alive—“will be caught up together . . . to meet the Lord in the air” (1Th 4:17). Therefore, we must not set specific dates. However, we must be alert and ready for this moment, since it will surely come (1Co 15:51-52). (See [Matthew Principle 53 - Christ’s Second Coming](#), p. 1253.)

Reflection and Response

What has happened historically when people have set dates for Christ’s second coming?



THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS

14 It was two days before the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a cunning way to arrest Jesus and kill him. ²“Not during the festival,” they said, “so that there won’t be a riot among the people.”

THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY

³ While he was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper ⁸ as he was reclining at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured it on his head. ⁴ But some were expressing indignation to one another: “Why has this perfume been wasted? ⁵ For this perfume might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii^C and given to the poor.” And they began to scold her.

⁶ Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? She has done a noble thing for me. ⁷ You always have the poor with you, and you can do what is good for them whenever you want, but you do not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body in advance for burial. ⁹ Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. ¹¹ And when they heard this, they were glad and promised to give him money. So he started looking for a good opportunity to betray him.

■ [Matthew Principle 54 - Carnal Influence](#), p. 1254.

PREPARATION FOR PASSOVER

¹² On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrifice the Passover lamb, his disciples asked him,

“Where do you want us to go and prepare the Passover so that you may eat it?”

¹³ So he sent two of his disciples and told them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. ¹⁴ Wherever he enters, tell the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?”’ ¹⁵ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there.” ¹⁶ So the disciples went out, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

BETRAYAL AT THE PASSOVER

¹⁷ When evening came, he arrived with the Twelve.

¹⁸ While they were reclining and eating, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me — one who is eating with me.”

¹⁹ They began to be distressed and to say to him one by one, “Surely not I?”

²⁰ He said to them, “It is one of the Twelve — the one who is dipping bread in the bowl with me. ²¹ For the Son of Man will go just as it is written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born.”

THE FIRST LORD’S SUPPER

²² As they were eating, he took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take it; this is my body.” ²³ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant,^D which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly I tell you, I will no longer

^A13:33 Other mss add *and pray* ^B14:3 Gk *lepros*; a term for various skin diseases; see Lv 13-14 ^C14:5 A denarius = one day’s wage

^D14:24 Other mss read *the new covenant*

drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new^A in the kingdom of God.”

²⁶ After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

■ Luke Principle 46 - The Lord's Supper, p. 1336.

PETER'S DENIAL PREDICTED

²⁷ Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will fall away,^B because it is written:

**I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.^C**

²⁸ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”

■ Zechariah Principle 11 - The Great Commission, p. 1195.

²⁹ Peter told him, “Even if everyone falls away, I will not.”

³⁰ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to him, “today, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.”

³¹ But he kept insisting, “If I have to die with you, I will never deny you.” And they all said the same thing.

■ Luke Principle 48 - Satanic Attacks, p. 1337.

THE PRAYER IN THE GARDEN

³² Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he told his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴ He said to them, “I am deeply grieved^D to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake.” ³⁵ He went a little farther, fell to the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, “*Abba,*^E Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.” ³⁷ Then he came and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Couldn't you stay awake one hour?” ³⁸ Stay awake and pray so that you won't enter into temptation. ^F The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ³⁹ Once again he went away and prayed, saying the same thing. ⁴⁰ And again he came and found them sleeping, because they could not keep their eyes open. They did not know what to say to him. ⁴¹ Then he came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The time has come. See, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Get up; let's go. See, my betrayer is near.”

MARK PRINCIPLE 26 - SPIRITUAL TESTS

There are times in our lives when we should expect to face spiritual tests that may be painful and even embarrassing.

Earlier, Peter had sincerely stated that no matter what happened to Jesus and regardless of the response of his fellow disciples, he would not forsake the Lord (v. 29). However, when he was chosen to share more intimately in Jesus's agonizing prayer experience, he fell asleep.

Mark captured what must have been an excruciatingly painful and embarrassing moment for Peter. Jesus addressed him as “Simon” (v. 37), his name before it was changed to Peter, which means “rock” (Jn 1:40-42). Jesus was subtly reminding him that if he



were so strong and such a great leader, why couldn't he stay awake for a brief time? Jesus was pointing out that he was not at this moment the “rock” he should be! He was beginning to crumble.

Most of us can identify with Peter's experience. We've made public statements about our commitment to Christ, and there are times when we all need to be asked some penetrating accountability questions—even in front of our peers.

Reflection and Response

Can you think of a time in your life when you can identify to some extent with Peter's experience in the garden of Gethsemane?

JUDAS'S BETRAYAL OF JESUS

⁴³ While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, suddenly arrived. With him was a mob, with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. ⁴⁴ His betrayer had given them a signal. “The one I kiss,” he said, “he's the one; arrest him and take him away under guard.” ⁴⁵ So when he came, immediately he went up to Jesus and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. ⁴⁶ They took hold of him and arrested him. ⁴⁷ One of those who stood by drew his sword, struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear.

⁴⁸ Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs, as if I were a criminal,^G to capture

me?” ⁴⁹ Every day I was among you, teaching in the temple, and you didn't arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”

⁵⁰ Then they all deserted him and ran away. ⁵¹ Now a certain young man, wearing nothing but a linen cloth, was following him. They caught hold of him, ⁵² but he left the linen cloth behind and ran away naked.

^A14:25 Or *drink new wine*; lit *drink it new* ^B14:27 Other mss add *because of me this night* ^C14:27 Zch 13:7 ^D14:34 Or “*My soul is swallowed up in sorrow*” ^E14:36 Aramaic for *father* ^F14:38 Or *won't be put to the test* ^G14:48 Or *insurrectionist*

MARK PRINCIPLE 27 - EMBARRASSING MOMENTS

When we at times engage in actions that are shameful, we should be on guard against our tendency to try to hide our identity.

We do not know who this young man was who “ran away naked” that night (v. 52). However, there is some circumstantial evidence that it may have been John Mark, the author of this Gospel. The “linen cloth” he left behind implies he had been wearing an expensive robe, and we know that Mark’s mother Mary was a well-to-do woman. She employed a servant, and her home was large enough that the church met there (Ac 12:11-13).

It’s easy to understand why Mark would want to remain anonymous. Even though all the other disciples forsook the Lord, in his youthful eagerness, he may have been embarrassed that he did the same. Also, when Mark wrote this Gospel, he would have had vivid memories of his decision to abandon Paul and his cousin Barnabas on the first missionary journey. He

would remember that his desertion eventually led to a “sharp disagreement,” splitting up these two prominent missionaries, leading them in separate directions (Ac 13:13; 15:36-39).

If this was indeed an anonymous reference to John Mark’s actions, we can learn a very valuable lesson. We should admit our failures, just as Paul did regarding his behavior as a self-righteous Pharisee (1Tm 1:12-17). When we openly confess our failures and experience forgiveness, it not only helps us to heal emotionally and spiritually, but it also serves as an example for others so that they too can have the courage to confess and experience true freedom in Christ.

Reflection and Response

Why is it difficult to admit our failures and put embarrassing experiences behind us?



JESUS FACES THE SANHEDRIN

⁵³ They led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes assembled.

⁵⁴ Peter followed him at a distance, right into the high priest’s courtyard. He was sitting with the servants,^A warming himself by the fire.

⁵⁵ The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they could not find any.⁵⁶ For many were giving false testimony against him, and the testimonies did not agree.⁵⁷ Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, stating,⁵⁸ “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with human hands, and in three days I will build another not made by hands.’”⁵⁹ Yet their testimony did not agree even on this.

⁶⁰ Then the high priest stood up before them all and questioned Jesus, “Don’t you have an answer to what these men are testifying against you?”⁶¹ But he kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest questioned him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”

⁶² “I am,” said Jesus, “and you will see **the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.**”^B

⁶³ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “Why do we still need witnesses?⁶⁴ You have heard the blasphemy. What is your decision?” They all condemned him as deserving death.

⁶⁵ Then some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to beat him, saying, “Prophesy!” The temple servants also took him and slapped him.

PETER DENIES HIS LORD

⁶⁶ While Peter was in the courtyard below, one of the high priest’s maidservants came.⁶⁷ When she saw Pe-

ter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.”

⁶⁸ But he denied it: “I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about.” Then he went out to the entryway,^C and a rooster crowed.^D

⁶⁹ When the maidservant saw him again, she began to tell those standing nearby, “This man is one of them.”

⁷⁰ But again he denied it. After a little while those standing there said to Peter again, “You certainly are one of them, since you’re also a Galilean.”^E

⁷¹ Then he started to curse and swear, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about!”

⁷² Immediately a rooster crowed a second time, and Peter remembered when Jesus had spoken the word to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

■ [Matthew Principle 55 - Our Great High Priest, p. 1256.](#)

JESUS FACES PILATE

15 As soon as it was morning, having held a meeting with the elders, scribes, and the whole Sanhedrin, the chief priests tied Jesus up, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate.

² So Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.”

³ And the chief priests accused him of many things.

⁴ Pilate questioned him again, “Aren’t you going to answer? Look how many things they are accusing you of!”

⁵ But Jesus still did not answer, and so Pilate was amazed.

JESUS OR BARABBAS

⁶ At the festival Pilate used to release for the people a prisoner whom they requested.⁷ There was one named Barabbas, who was in prison with rebels who had

^A14:54 Or temple police, or officers, also in v. 65 ^B14:62 Ps 110:1; Dn 7:13 ^C14:68 Or forecourt ^D14:68 Other mss omit and a rooster crowed ^E14:70 Other mss add and your speech shows it

committed murder during the rebellion.⁸ The crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do for them as was his custom.⁹ Pilate answered them, "Do you want me to release the King of the Jews for you?"¹⁰ For he knew it was because of envy that the chief priests had handed him over.¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that he would release Barabbas to them instead.

¹² Pilate asked them again, "Then what do you want me to do with the one you call the King of the Jews?"

¹³ Again they shouted, "Crucify him!"

¹⁴ Pilate said to them, "Why? What has he done wrong?"

But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!"

¹⁵ Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them; and after having Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified.

■ Matthew Principle 57 - The Power of Self-Interests, p. 1257.

MOCKED BY THE MILITARY

¹⁶ The soldiers led him away into the palace (that is, the governor's residence) and called the whole company together.¹⁷ They dressed him in a purple robe, twisted together a crown of thorns, and put it on him.¹⁸ And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

¹⁹ They were hitting him on the head with a stick and spitting on him. Getting down on their knees, they were paying him homage.²⁰ After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his clothes on him.

CRUCIFIED BETWEEN TWO CRIMINALS

They led him out to crucify him.²¹ They forced a man coming in from the country, who was passing by, to carry Jesus's cross. He was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

²² They brought Jesus to the place called *Golgotha* (which means Place of the Skull).²³ They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

²⁴ Then they crucified him and divided his clothes, casting lots for them to decide what each would get.

²⁵ Now it was nine in the morning^A when they crucified him.²⁶ The inscription of the charge written against him was: THE KING OF THE JEWS.²⁷ They crucified two criminals^B with him, one on his right and one on his left.^C

²⁹ Those who passed by were yelling insults at^D him, shaking their heads, and saying, "Ha! The one who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,³⁰ save yourself by coming down from the cross!"³¹ In the same way, the chief priests with the scribes were mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself!³² Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe." Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.

■ Luke Principle 50 - Our Eternal Hope, p. 1340.

THE DEATH OF JESUS

³³ When it was noon,^E darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.^F³⁴ And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?" which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"^G

³⁵ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "See, he's calling for Elijah."

³⁶ Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, fixed it on a stick, offered him a drink, and said, "Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down."

³⁷ Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last.

³⁸ Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.³⁹ When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he^H breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"^I

■ Matthew Principle 58 - More Miraculous Signs, p. 1258.

⁴⁰ There were also women watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.⁴¹ In Galilee these women followed him and took care of him. Many other women had come up with him to Jerusalem.

MARK PRINCIPLE 28 - GODLY WOMEN

We must never overlook or take for granted the significant ministry contributions God designed for committed Christian women.

As Mark began to conclude his Gospel, he referred three times to women who were disciples (vv. 40-41, 47; 16:1-10). In fact, in addition to those he named specifically, he also referred to "many other women" who had followed Jesus to Jerusalem. These women were sincere disciples of Christ and demonstrated their commitment by ministering to the Savior during his earthly ministry. Luke filled in more details:

Afterward he was traveling from one town and village to another, preaching and telling the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary, called Magdalene (seven demons had come out of her); Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; Susanna; and many others who were supporting them from their possessions. (Lk 8:1-3)

When Jesus was taken captive, all of the apostles fled. However, many women stayed and continued to watch ▶

^A15:25 Lit was the third hour ^B15:27 Or revolutionaries ^C15:27 Some mss include v. 28: So the Scripture was fulfilled that says: And he was counted among criminals. ^D15:29 Or passed by blasphemed ^E15:33 Lit the sixth hour ^F15:33 Lit the ninth hour, also in v. 34 ^G15:34 Ps 22:1 ^H15:39 Other mss read saw that he cried out like this and ^I15:39 Or a son of God

▶ what was happening, though understandably “from a distance” (Mk 15:40). True, compared with the apostles, they would have not been perceived as a significant threat to the religious leaders. However, we must not overlook their boldness, loyalty, and dedication, which definitely reflected their inner strength.

Reflection and Response

In what ways did Paul follow Jesus’s model in ministering with godly women in his apostolic church-planting efforts? (See Romans Principle 34 - A Model of Encouragement, p. 1461.)



THE BURIAL OF JESUS

⁴²When it was already evening, because it was the day of preparation (that is, the day before the Sabbath),

⁴³Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin who was himself looking forward to the kingdom of God, came and boldly went to Pilate and asked for Jesus’s body. ⁴⁴Pilate was surprised that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had already died. ⁴⁵When he found out from the centurion, he gave the corpse to Joseph.

⁴⁶After he bought some linen cloth, Joseph took him down and wrapped him in the linen. Then he laid him in a tomb cut out of the rock and rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. ⁴⁷Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus were watching where he was laid.

■ [John Principle 37 - Urgency with Patience, p. 1381.](#)

RESURRECTION MORNING

16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they could go and anoint him. ²Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb at sunrise. ³They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?” ⁴Looking up, they noticed that the stone — which was very large — had been rolled away.

⁵When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side; they were alarmed. ⁶“Don’t be alarmed,” he told them. “You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him.

⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter; ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there just as he told you.’”

⁸They went out and ran from the tomb, because trembling and astonishment overwhelmed them. And they said nothing to anyone, since they were afraid.

[Some of the earliest mss conclude with 16:8.]^A

THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK: APPEARANCES OF THE RISEN LORD

⁹Early on the first day of the week, after he had risen, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. ¹⁰She went and reported to those who had been with him, as they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹Yet, when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe it.

¹²After this, he appeared in a different form to two of them walking on their way into the country. ¹³And they went and reported it to the rest, who did not believe them either.

■ [Luke Principle 51 - The Living Word, p. 1341.](#)

THE GREAT COMMISSION

¹⁴Later he appeared to the Eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table. He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who saw him after he had risen. ¹⁵Then he said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues;^B ¹⁸they will pick up snakes;^C if they should drink anything deadly, it will not harm them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will get well.”

■ [Matthew Principle 59 - The Great Commission, p. 1259.](#)

THE ASCENSION

¹⁹So the Lord Jesus, after speaking to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word by the accompanying signs.]

^A**16:8** Other mss include vv. 9-20 as a longer ending. The following shorter ending is found in some mss between v. 8 and v. 9 and in one ms after v. 8 (each of which omits vv. 9-20): *And all that had been commanded to them they quickly reported to those around Peter. After these things, Jesus himself sent out through them from east to west, the holy and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.* ^B**16:17** = languages

^C**16:18** Other mss add *with their hands*