Session 1: Mark 1:1–13

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Jesus is unlike any other savior, and he calls us to make him our first priority.

Head Change: To understand that Jesus Christ is holy, unlike any other.

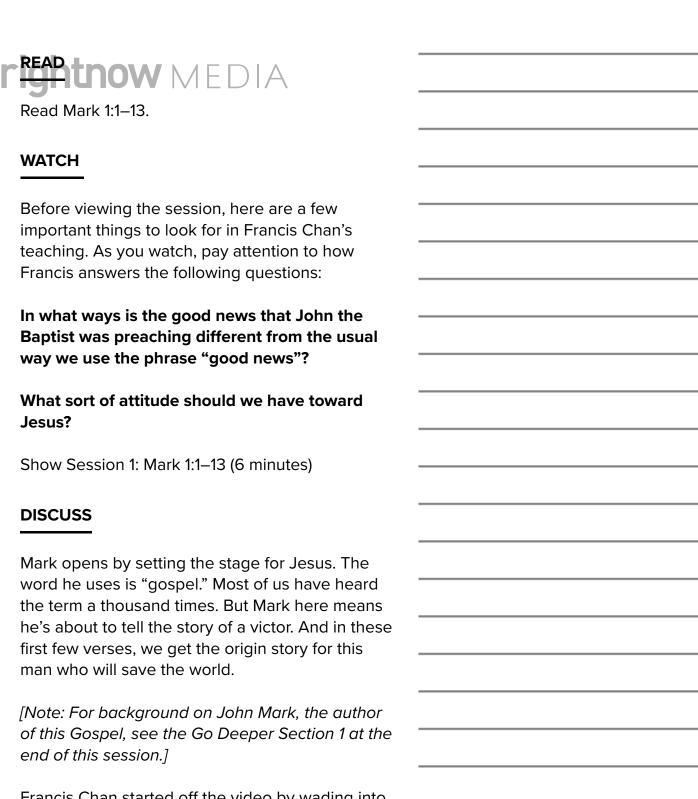
Heart Change: To feel fascinated with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Life Change: To actively make Jesus Christ the priority of our lives.

OPEN

Jesus is a well-known figure, even to nonbelievers. But people have widely varying opinions about him. **How would you describe him? What makes Jesus unique?**

Whether you've had a relationship with Jesus for a long time, are a new follower of his, or are still wondering about who Jesus is, one goal of this study is that everyone would walk away with a greater appreciation of who Jesus is and how a relationship with him will dramatically alter your life.



Francis Chan started off the video by wading into the waters of the Jordan River and remembering the baptism of Jesus. John the Baptist had been baptizing people who were repenting of their sin, telling them about the one who was to come. John understood exactly who Jesus was. He went so far as to tell the people he was not worthy to untie his sandals (1:7). Why do you think John felt unworthy to untie Jesus's sandals? What does

that say about John?

Describe your attitude toward your sin. Does it evoke as strong a reaction as John's? Why or why not?	
Francis asked us if we truly grasped the immensity of the Incarnation. He tried to imagine what it must have felt like for John the Baptist to stand in front of his Creator. Think about your own Christian life. In what ways has Jesus become too familiar? Do you find yourself taking him for granted? How?	
Read Mark 1:9–11.	
In these three sentences, Mark mentions the three persons of the Trinity in action together. What is each one doing? How are they working in unison?	
Francis also emphasized the uniqueness of the gospel, the good news from God on a completely different level from what we often describe as good. In what way did he describe the good news?	
[Note: For further study on euangelion, see the Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of the session.]	
Reading this opening passage, what do you expect from Jesus? What kinds of things do you anticipate from him as Mark's Gospel goes forward?	
Read Mark 1:12–13.	
After being baptized, Jesus departed from John. The text says that "the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness." So he went, and there he experienced forty days of hunger and temptation. Mark doesn't give a lot of details. What do you think Mark wanted to communicate with this short summary of Jesus's experience in the wilderness? (Jesus's temptation helped prepare him for the work God had for him to do.)	

Looking back at your life, do you see evidence of God using challenging times to prepare you for something he had for you to do in the future? If so, share that with the group.	
[Note: For further study on ekballo, see the Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this session.]	
Mark opens his gospel with a dramatic picture that depicts Jesus as the Son of God. C. S. Lewis once famously wrote that we must not fall into the trap of merely considering Jesus to be a good moral teacher:	
Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. (Mere Christianity, p. 56)	
Who is Jesus to you? Have you decided to trust that he is indeed the Son of God? If not, what is holding you back?	
If you do believe Jesus is God, what kind of savior has he been in your life? How are you living daily with that reality?	
LAST WORD	
The Gospel of Mark examines Jesus's claim to be the Son of God As we work through this study, we will see much more evidence to bolster Jesus's claim. Once Mark establishes Jesus as the Son of God, he then asks us how we plan to respond to that truth. Will you keep your ears open and willing to hear? And if you already believe, what will you do with his teachings?	
GO DEEPER	
The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group	

discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.	
But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.	
1. Background When it comes to studying any book of the Bible, it's good to start with some background. Let's take a brief look at the historical context and purpose behind the Gospel of Mark.	
Author Of the four gospels, Mark is easily the shortest. It's also anonymous. The gospel itself does not specifically name "Mark" as its author, but the bulk of church history since the second century has affirmed it as so. Most likely, the same John Mark who traveled with Paul during his missionary journeys wrote this gospel.	
For more information about John Mark, see Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 14:51–52; 15:37–39; Col. 4:10; Phlm. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:13.	
Purpose Writing from Rome in the first century, Mark penned his gospel following two major themes: First, a thorough look at Jesus and, second, the true nature of discipleship. Since it was written to a largely Gentile (non-Jewish) audience, Mark went out of his way to explain Jewish customs and described Jesus as both the Jewish Messiah ("Son of David") and Savior of the Gentiles. Even more, he emphasized the suffering and death of Jesus as the means by which we enter into a right relationship with God by faith. And the path of Jesus is the path we follow in true discipleship.	
Mark wrote to Gentiles. John the Baptist spoke to Jews. Both wanted people to understand that Jesus was the most important person anyone	

obey him. The Creator-God promises them everything: life, happiness, power, friendship, and rulership over all the earth. They just have to trust and obey. But they didn't.	
Re-read Mark 1:11–13. Then, if you don't remember the story of Adam and Eve's failure, read Genesis 3:1–15 too.	
What mandates from God were ignored or disobeyed in the Genesis passage? What resulted from their rebellious behavior?	
Jesus obeyed the directive of his Father out of love and trust. Too often we fail to obey God due to our selfishness and fear. We can't seem to truly believe that his way is the best way, that he will strengthen us for the task he's set before us. So we refuse his direction and end up losing out on the blessing he had planned for us.	
Take time to reflect on your ability to discern God's leading. Consider why you may be choosing to delay obeying.	
Spend a couple of minutes in prayer, asking God to teach you more about Jesus as the Son of God through studying the Gospel of Mark.	