



A Lost Cause

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SERMON SCHEDULE & SYNOPSIS

We all experience moments and seasons where it feels like what we are walking through is a lost cause. We lose hope. We blame God. We walk away from our faith. In light of eternity, these momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. What we believe is a lost cause, isn't true. The troubles and afflictions will one day realize they are the lost cause because of the victory we have in Jesus.

January 31

Breaking the Power of Evil

Mark 5:1-20

Evil is real. We experience the results of Satan's temporary hold on the world. As we are going to see in our reading from the Gospel of Mark, the power of Satan is ultimately a lost cause because Jesus has defeated Satan.

February 7

Breaking the Power of Death

Mark 5:21-24; 35-43

We will all die one day. Many people are so afraid of death that they stop really living. As we are going to see in our reading from the Gospel of Mark, the power of death over us is ultimately a lost cause because Jesus was raised from the dead, conquering death.

February 14

Breaking the Power of Prolonged Sickness

Mark 5:24b-34

Everybody is dealing with something. Many people are battling cancer, heart disease, diabetes, depression, and other chronic health issues. As we are going to see in our reading from the Gospel of Mark, the power of prolonged sickness is ultimately a lost cause because Jesus is sovereign over all sickness.

INTRODUCTION

This study is designed to help you grow in Bible literacy and Bible application. In doing so, it has three goals. First, it seeks to deepen your understanding of a sermon series in an all-church study in a way that will enable you to retain what you learn. Second, it seeks to train you to ask better questions of any biblical text on your own. Third, it seeks to help equip you and challenge you to do what the Bible teaches.

Many of us come to our study of the Bible eager to pull from its wisdom what will help us to live differently. And we should. But before we can move from awareness of what we don't know of the text to awareness of what we should do in response to the text, we must move through the learning process. This study is designed to help you learn and employ that process.

The measure of maturity for a follower of Jesus is often based on knowledge – how much do we know about a particular passage or topic in the Bible? Then there's a little bit of talk about obedience – how do we put what we learned into practice? Perhaps the least talked about and implemented step is sharing what we have learned and done – who do I need to tell what God is showing me? All three (knowledge, obedience, and sharing) are equally important in the life of a disciple of Jesus.

A disciple in Pakistan wrote, “We gain understanding through our obedience, instead of trying to understand before being obedient.”

The Bible is a collection of 66 books inspired by God and written by over 40 human authors over a span of more than 2,000 years. God's Word is accessible enough for every child in our kids' ministry to experience the love of Jesus the first time someone opens the Bible with them, and

God's Word is so deep and expansive that it can take a lifetime of intense searching and studying to even scratch the surface!

Studying this accessible, yet expansive, book, brings up a question of "ends" and "means." We don't study Scripture to become better at "studying Scripture." God has provided the Bible as the means to the end, which is growing in a vital relationship with Jesus.

This is not a new problem. 600 years before the New Testament was written, the prophet Jeremiah was sent to a people who had mixed their end with their means. The leaders entrusted with mediating God's presence to the people had stopped seeking the Lord, and those tasked with teaching the deep truths of God's Word did not know God themselves (**Jeremiah 2:8**)

Fast forward 600 years, and Jesus offers a similar warning to the leaders of His day...

John 5:39-40, *"You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."*

We desire to "study the Scriptures" in ways that connect us with Jesus. We come to the sacred text with the purpose of growing more and more in a vital relationship with Jesus, learning to respond in faith as we encounter Him, and then to share with others what we are learning and doing. There are many different ways to engage with God's Word. This study guide is one of those ways.

When we study this Bible together, we want to think of ourselves more like detectives rather than lawyers. Approaching the text like a lawyer would mean only looking for parts that support the particular case we want to make. On the other hand, as detectives, we are going to look under every stone, try to see everything there is to see, and draw conclusions based on what we find.

Studying the Bible together in groups allows us to hear from everyone in the room and be shaped and challenged by the ways the Holy Spirit is interacting with all of us together. We are better together! God works through the unique lives of everyone in the group – our stories, cultural perspectives, and experiences – and the observations and questions that each unique person can bring will give our study of Scripture more depth and richness. “As iron sharpens iron” goes the proverb, each person in the circle is a gift to the rest of us as we seek to grow in wisdom, understanding, obedience, and sharing.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

What follows is a general flow you might use for your meeting.

BEFORE YOU GATHER

ATTEND WORSHIP in person or online to gather with the church to sing, pray, give, and hear the message that corresponds with each week.

Hebrews 10:24-25, *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

PRAY for each person in your group by name. As you get to know the prayer concerns of each person, continue to pray for them throughout the week.

Colossians 1:9, *“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives.”*

GATHERING AS A GROUP

CHECK-IN (10-15 minutes)

Connect with one another about your week. Share a vision of why you are gathering. Say something about your heart for the group’s transformation and growth.

PRAYER FOR THE STUDY (2 minutes)

Invite someone to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and speak through each part of the study.

OBSERVATION (10-15 minutes)

The Bible was originally written to be heard, even more than read. Take some time to read the week's passage out loud. As you hear it, start making mental observations about what stands out.

INTERPRETATION (15-20 minutes)

Use your observation to let your curiosity out. What questions do you have that would help unpack the significance and meaning in the text? Then start looking for answers to your questions. What does the text say, not what do you want it to say?

APPLICATION (15-20 minutes)

A good application begins with God. Flowing from that, application allows the biblical text to speak into our everyday, ordinary lives. It calls us to action and allows the Holy Spirit to connect the dots from what we are reading to our real lives, relationships, and decisions.

As you decide what the Holy Spirit is leading you to do with what you just learned, make sure it's something concrete you can actually do. Move from "be a better husband" to "spend an extra 10 minutes at the table after dinner talking with my wife three days this coming week." The problem with the first one is, you don't know if you have succeeded. The second one, you will definitively know.

SHARING (5-10 minutes)

With whom will you share what you have learned and are going to do? Be specific.

PRAYER (10 minutes)

Invite someone to pray over what you have learned, what people will be doing in the coming week, and who they will be sharing it with.

AFTER YOU GATHER

CHECK-IN & PRAY for each other as you each live into your commitments.

WEEK 1: BREAKING THE POWER OF EVIL

Welcome to week 1! The goal for this week is not to necessarily cover all of the questions and discussion points below. Instead, it is about becoming more like Jesus, learning to listen to His voice, to put into action what you've learned, and to share it with someone else as we continue our study of the **Gospel of Mark**.

CHECK-IN (10-15 minutes)

The group leader can gather everyone together and share a vision of why you are gathering in the first place. Then check-in with one another plus one. Here are some possible starting questions...

- **Check-in ideas** = How are you doing? How is your marriage? How are your kids? How are your parents?
- **Plus one ideas** = How are your neighbors? How are your co-workers? How are your friends?

PRAYER FOR THE STUDY (2 minutes)

Invite someone to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and speak through each part of the study.

OBSERVATION (10-15 minutes)

Have someone read **Mark 5:1-20** out loud.

- Allow 5 minutes for everyone, on their own, to underline or circle any key observations.
- Read the passage out loud again in a different translation. Listen for new words or phrases that catch your attention.

- As a group, look at the content...
 - Characters – Note both individuals and groups and ways they are described.
 - Relationships – Note interaction, including dialogue. Try to “read between the lines.”
 - Place and Setting – Look up geography on a map. Where is this passage happening?
 - Action and Events – Note verb tense (present, past, future). Identify primary and secondary activity.
 - Surrounding Text – Skim the surrounding chapters and note how this story functions in light of the whole.
- Share key observations and things that intrigue you as a group that you noticed in the above areas. There’s no agenda to “get it right” during this time. To help stay focused on “observation” without drifting into interpretation, consider having each person begin by saying something like, “I see this is why Jesus crossed over to the other side of the lake.” “I see conflict between Jesus and the demon, conflict between the man and the people in the nearby town.”

INTERPRETATION (15-20 minutes)

Use your observation to let your curiosity out as you begin to interpret what is written in **Mark 5:1-20**.

Allow 5 minutes to create a list of questions about this passage that would help you to unpack the significance and meaning in the text. Ask someone to write down the questions. When we read Scripture, the first and foremost reason is to know God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We want to ask questions that help us to know God and grow in a vital relationship with God. One question you can ask of any text is: *What does this text reveal about the character and heart of Jesus?*

Questions about **Mark 5:1-20**:

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Now begin spending time looking for answers to the top questions your group landed on. We want to explore what the original intent and significance of the text is before turning to application. It is easy to stray into opinions or things we've heard before, so help keep each other in interpretation mode by asking, *"Where do we see that in the text?"*

Have someone write down the answers for the above questions and include the specific Scripture reference used to answer each question.

Interpretation about **Mark 5:1-20**:

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Example of question and answer from **Mark 5:1-20**...

- Question: Why did the demon-possessed man fall on his knees before Jesus?
- Answer: **Mark 5:7** – The demon knew Jesus was the Son of God

Finally, discuss what you think the author (Mark) hoped the original audience would get from this text.

APPLICATION (15-20 minutes)

A good application begins with God. The Bible is first and foremost a story about God, who He is, and what He is doing. Flowing from that, application allows the biblical text to speak into our everyday, ordinary lives. It calls us to action and allows the Holy Spirit to connect the dots from what we are reading to our real lives, relationships, and decisions.

As you decide what the Holy Spirit is leading you to do with what you just learned, make sure it's something concrete you can actually do. Move from "be a better husband" to "spend an extra 10 minutes at the table after dinner talking with my wife three days this coming week." The problem with the first one is, you don't know if you have succeeded. The second one, you will definitively know.

Look back at the answers to your questions. Think about some active response that will tangibly express the application this week. It might be a public action of mission or service (Ex. [Visit someone in prison](#)). It might be committing to having a conversation with someone (Ex. [Have coffee with someone you know who is struggling with depression](#)).

What are you personally going to do this week in light of what the Holy Spirit revealed to you about **Mark 5:1-20**?

Everyone doesn't need to apply the text in the same way. What is risky and faith-building for one might not be for another. What's important is to make things clear and follow up the next week and encourage one another's growth and transformation.

SHARING (5-10 minutes)

Our faith is personal, but it was never designed to be private. One of the most powerful ways to grow in your faith is to share what you have learned with someone else. With whom will you share what you have learned and are going to do?

PRAYER (10 minutes)

Invite someone to pray over what you have learned, what people will be doing in the coming week, and who they will be sharing it with.

AFTER YOU GATHER

CHECK-IN & PRAY for each other as you each live into your commitments.

FOR FURTHER READING

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/why-we-should-not-fear-satan-and-demons/>

WEEK 2: BREAKING THE POWER OF DEATH

Welcome to week 2! The goal for this week is not to necessarily cover all of the questions and discussion points below. Instead, it is about becoming more like Jesus, learning to listen to His voice, to put into action what you've learned, and to share it with someone else as we continue our study of the **Gospel of Mark**.

CHECK-IN (10-15 minutes)

The group leader can gather everyone together and share a vision of why you are gathering in the first place. Then check-in with one another plus one. Here are some possible starting questions...

- **Check-in ideas** = What are you celebrating? What are you struggling with?
- **Plus one idea** = Do you have a neighbor we can pray for?

PRAYER FOR THE STUDY (2 minutes)

Invite someone to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and speak through each part of the study.

ACCOUNTABILITY (10 minutes)

Last week each person committed to live out what they learned from **Mark 5:1-20** and to share it with someone else. Allow each person to share how they lived into their application from last week. If someone didn't do what they committed to do, encourage them to do it this week.

OBSERVATION (10-15 minutes)

Have someone read **Mark 5:21-24; 35-43** out loud.

- Allow 5 minutes for everyone, on their own, to underline or circle any key observations.
- Read the passage out loud again in a different translation. Listen for new words or phrases that catch your attention.

- As a group, look at the content...
 - Characters – Note both individuals and groups and ways they are described.
 - Relationships – Note interaction, including dialogue, try to “read between the lines.”
 - Place and Setting – Look up geography on a map, where is this passage happening?
 - Action and Events – Note verb tense (present, past, future). Identify primary and secondary activity.
 - Surrounding Text – Skim the surrounding chapters and note how this story functions in light of the whole.
- Share key observations and things that intrigue you as a group that you noticed in the above areas. There’s no agenda to “get it right” during this time. To help stay focused on “observation” without drifting into interpretation, consider having each person begin by saying something like, “I see why this dad would plead with Jesus.” “I see why the people would laugh at Jesus when He said the girl was asleep.”

INTERPRETATION (15-20 minutes)

Use your observation to let your curiosity out as you begin to interpret what is written in **Mark 5:21-24; 35-43**.

Allow 5 minutes to create a list of questions about this passage that would help you to unpack the significance and meaning in the text. Ask someone to write down the questions. When we read Scripture, the first and foremost reason is to know God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We want to ask questions that help us to know God and grow in a vital relationship with God. One question you can ask of any text is: *What does this text reveal about the character and heart of Jesus?*

Questions about **Mark 5:21-24; 35-43:**

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Now begin spending time looking for answers to the top questions your group landed on. We want to explore what the original intent and significance of the text is before turning to application. It is easy to stray into opinions or things we've heard before, so help keep each other in interpretation mode by asking, *"Where do we see that in the text?"*

Have someone write down the answers for the above questions and include the specific Scripture reference used to answer each question.

Interpretation about **Mark 5:21-24; 35-43:**

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Example of question and answer from **Mark 5:21-24; 35-43...**

- Question: **What was Jairus dealing with when he got the news that his daughter had died?**
- Answer: **Mark 5:36** – He was afraid they were too late.

Finally, discuss what you think the author (Mark) hoped the original audience would get from this text.

APPLICATION (15-20 minutes)

A good application begins with God. The Bible is first and foremost a story about God, who He is, and what He is doing. Flowing from that, application allows the biblical text to speak into our everyday, ordinary lives. It calls us to action and allows the Holy Spirit to connect the dots from what we are reading to our real lives, relationships, and decisions.

As you decide what the Holy Spirit is leading you to do with what you just learned, make sure it's something concrete you can actually do. Move from "be a better husband" to "spend an extra 10 minutes at the table after dinner talking with my wife three days this coming week." The problem with the first one is, you don't know if you have succeeded. The second one, you will definitively know.

Look back at the answers to your questions. Think about some active response that will tangibly express the application this week. It might be a public action of mission or service (Ex. **Make a meal for someone who has recently experienced a death in their family**). It might be committing to having a conversation with someone (Ex. **Invite someone you know whose child is sick over to your house**).

What are you personally going to do this week in light of what the Holy Spirit revealed to you about **Mark 5:21-24; 35-43**?

Everyone doesn't need to apply the text in the same way. What is risky and faith-building for one might not be for another. What's important is to make things clear and follow up the next week and encourage one another's growth and transformation.

SHARING (5-10 minutes)

Our faith is personal, but it was never designed to be private. One of the most powerful ways to grow in your faith is to share what you have learned with someone else. With whom will you share what you have learned and are going to do?

PRAYER (10 minutes)

Invite someone to pray over what has been learned, what people will be doing in the coming week, and who they will be sharing it with.

AFTER YOU GATHER

CHECK-IN & PRAY for each other as you each live into your commitments.

FOR FURTHER READING

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-do-i-overcome-my-fear-of-death>

WEEK 3: BREAKING THE POWER OF PROLONGED SICKNESS

Welcome to week 3! The goal for this week is not to necessarily cover all of the questions and discussion points below. Instead, it is about becoming more like Jesus, learning to listen to His voice, to put into action what you've learned, and to share it with someone else as we continue our study of the Gospel of Mark.

CHECK-IN (10-15 minutes)

The group leader can gather everyone together and share a vision of why you are gathering in the first place. Then check-in with one another plus one. Here are some possible starting questions...

- **Check-in idea** = What are you grateful for today?
- **Plus one idea** = Who is someone in your life that doesn't know Jesus that we can pray for?

PRAYER FOR THE STUDY (2 minutes)

Invite someone to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and speak through each part of the study.

ACCOUNTABILITY (10 minutes)

Last week each person committed to live out what they learned from **Mark 5:21-24; 35-43** and to share it with someone else. Allow each person to share how they lived into their application from last week. If someone didn't do what they committed to do, encourage them to do it this week.

OBSERVATION (10-15 minutes)

Have someone read **Mark 5:24b-34** out loud.

- Allow 5 minutes for everyone, on their own, to underline or circle any key observations.

- Read the passage out loud again in a different translation. Listen for new words or phrases that catch your attention.
- As a group, look at the content...
 - Characters – Note both individuals and groups and ways they are described.
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 - Surrounding Text – Skim the surrounding chapters and note how this story functions in light of the whole.
- Share key observations and things that intrigue you as a group that you noticed in the above areas. There’s no agenda to “get it right” during this time. To help stay focused on “observation” without drifting into interpretation, consider having each person begin by saying something like, “I see the pain this woman experienced for a very long time.” “I see the courage of this woman to push her way to Jesus for healing.”

INTERPRETATION (15-20 minutes)

Use your observation to let your curiosity out as you begin to interpret what is written in **Mark 5:24b-34**.

Allow 5 minutes to create a list of questions about this passage that would help you to unpack the significance and meaning in the text. Ask someone to write down the questions. When we read Scripture, the first and foremost reason is to know God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We want to ask questions that help us to know God and grow in a vital relationship with God. One question you can ask of any text is: *What does this text reveal about the character and heart of Jesus?*

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Have someone write down the answers for the above questions and include the specific Scripture reference used to answer each question.

Interpretation about **Mark 5:24b-34**:

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Example of question and answer from **Mark 5:24b-34**...

- Question: **Why did the woman sneak up from behind?**
- Answer: **Mark 5:28** – She thought that all she needed to do was touch Jesus' clothes and she would be healed.

Finally, discuss what you think the author (Mark) hoped the original audience would get from this text.

APPLICATION (15-20 minutes)

A good application begins with God. The Bible is first and foremost a story about God, who He is, and what He is doing. Flowing from that, application allows the biblical text to speak into our everyday, ordinary lives. It calls us to action and allows the Holy Spirit to connect the dots from what we are reading to our real lives, relationships, and decisions.

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Look back at the answers to your questions. Think about some active response that will tangibly express the application this week. It might be a public action of mission or service (Ex. [Serve at the local homeless shelters – Union Mission or Welcome Home](#)). It might be committing to having a conversation with someone (Ex. [Do something fun with someone you know who has chronic pain](#)).

What are you personally going to do this week in light of what the Holy Spirit revealed to you about **Mark 5:24b-34**?

Everyone doesn't need to apply the text in the same way. What is risky and faith-building for one might not be for another. What's important is to make things clear and follow up the next week and encourage one another growth and transformation.

SHARING (5-10 minutes)

Our faith is personal, but it was never designed to be private. One of the most powerful ways to grow in your faith is to share what you have learned with someone else. With whom will you share what you have learned and are going to do?

PRAYER (10 minutes)

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FOR FURTHER READING

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