

CrossWise Living | *Bible Study Series*

The Book of
Mark

Dr. Gail Bones

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The Book of **Mark**

An intergenerational study of the
heart, mind, and strength
of the Son of God

Dr. Gail Bones

Dedication

For my children, Emily and Jonathan, who honor God as they strengthen and encourage others.

The Book of Mark

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About the Author

Gail Nelson Bones, Ed.D., is the founder of CrossWise Living, a ministry devoted to helping people at all stages in life navigate change through cross-generational relationships. She has been engaging audiences as a speaker, songwriter, and worship leader for over thirty years. Formerly a professor of education at San Diego Christian College, Dr. Bones is the author of *Living CrossWise: Hope and Help for Navigating Transition* (2013).

Gail and her husband Jeff have been married for over 30 years and together have recorded seven albums of original Christian music. Along with their now-grown children, they spent many years presenting family concerts at churches across the United States. Gail is currently a women's ministry leader and member of the worship team at her home church in La Mesa, California.



About the Study

After the first introductory lesson, for each of the ten weeks ahead you will have 5 days of homework to complete. Although you may wonder now how you will find the time to do this, you cannot imagine how beneficial it will be until you actually make a commitment to study the Word of God for yourself. When you ask God to help you fit this in to your daily schedule, he will show you, giving you the time and energy to keep your commitment. You will be discovering the delights of searching the Scriptures on your own, using both the Old and New Testaments to find answers to questions that will range from historical information to personal application.

CrossWise Groups – Class sessions will start with a 15 minute flexible group discussion to review last week's lesson(AQ1 each week) and discuss the entries on the ongoing Heart, Mind and Strength of the Son of God chart project. Participants will be in a different, intergenerational group of 4 each week.

Whole Class – The flexible group session will be followed by a whole group discussion, where you may be asked to volunteer to share your answers or look up Bible verses to read aloud. The focus during this part of class will be on gaining and sharing knowledge.

Small Groups – Finally, you will meet in your designated small group for discussion of the personal application questions (marked AQ). The focus here will be on gaining wisdom, which is the ability to apply the knowledge you have gained. Because you will be in a smaller group, you will have more opportunity to share the details of how God is working in your life as a result of your study of his Word. The final 15-20 minutes of your small group will be devoted to sharing prayer requests. It can be helpful to ask members to come prepared with their request written out so that they can share briefly and concisely. This workbook contains a place for you to record prayer requests as each member shares.

Tips for Leaders

Suggestions for First Class Session – Introduction

- The first lesson will help you to establish how much background knowledge participants may have about the life of Christ, and to set a tone where each person will feel comfortable and excited about studying God's Word. The activities are designed to help members get to know both Mark, the writer of this gospel, and each other.
- You will be working with two specific types of small groups.
 - 1) One is called a "CrossWise Group," which is a flexible group made up of individuals who are grouped specifically to engage in a one-time learning activity together during the whole class lesson time. The goal here is to foster intergenerational community, and to have all members of the class get to know one another. Each week students will be meeting with a different group of people, so name tags are important. This 15-minute sharing time at the beginning of the class will start with an icebreaker question (see suggestions in the appendix) and then the **AQ1** from Day 1. This will allow memorable insights from the previous week's small group to be reinforced and shared with another group of participants. This is also the time to discuss their work on the heart, mind, and strength charts each week.
 - 2) The second type of small group is a group assigned to a leader which will meet for a longer discussion of the homework questions and to share prayer needs at the end of the whole group sessions.
- During the introductory session, give participants a few moments to write their answers out to the questions marked "Individual" before they do the group questions. The first grouping will be flexible and intergenerational (the CrossWise group) and the second will be a meeting of the regularly assigned small groups.
- For each weekly lesson, you can keep it simple and just go through the questions, or you can add your own touches, like PowerPoint maps and graphics. Feel free to inject your own style and personality into the presentation.
- Review the weekly homework and select questions you wish to emphasize since there will not be time to discuss all of the questions. Ask students to mark any questions as they do their daily homework that they would like to bring up in the small group meeting.
- Application Questions (AQ) are provided in the shaded boxes for the second half of class, when members will meet in their small groups, for discussion and prayer. These will help students to really connect the Scripture to their lives.

Suggestions for Weekly Sessions

1. **Continue to invite participation** during the whole group sessions. You will note that most of even the informational, textual questions require critical thinking.
2. **Ask the Holy Spirit to guide** you each week as you choose the questions you want to emphasize in your whole group lesson since you will probably not have a chance to go over each question.
3. **Ask participants to mark the AQ questions** they are most interested in discussing in their small groups before they come to class. You may rotate the facilitation of discussion within the small groups each week.
4. **Prayer Requests.** As the leader, monitor the time. When you have about 15-20 minutes left for your session, announce that it is time to transition to prayer requests. Ask participants to come to class with their requests already written out so that their sharing will be concise enough for everyone to have a turn. Space is provided for recording these in the workbook. Have a plan for those times when someone needs some extra TLC or prayer- does your church have a counseling or prayer ministry? Is there someone who is willing to stay late to meet with ladies who might need extra support?



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SESSION 1

Introduction

“The high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’ Jesus said, ‘I am.’”

Mark 14:61-62 (NLT)

FIRST GROUP MEETING

Suggestion for Leaders: *In order to facilitate flexible grouping for CrossWise groups, have members choose a color-coded index card when they come in based on their age group or stage of life. For example, you might designate pink cards for those in their 20's, blue cards for those in their 30's, white cards for those in their 40's, etc. The goal is to be able to quickly divide participants into intergenerational groups. When it is time to form flexible groups for activities, have members find others with different color cards.*

After opening in prayer, the class leader or volunteer readers will read the following Introduction aloud, as members follow along and quickly mark any words or phrases that stand out to them.

INTRODUCTION

When an expert in the religious law tried to trap Jesus with this question, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:36-40, NIV). The gospel of Mark shows us the heart of God, the strength of God, and the mind of God through the life of his Son, Jesus Christ. In Mark, Jesus is depicted as a servant, the “Son of Man,” who spent his life demonstrating what it meant to love your neighbor as yourself.

The book of Mark was the first gospel, written in the late 50's or early 60's, approximately 20-30 years after Jesus' death. This testifies to its reliability because it would have been read by people who'd been alive at the time of Christ and thus able to either confirm or refute the claims Mark made. It is the shortest gospel, written in an active style and intended for Gentile readership, probably written from Rome.

Mark, or John Mark as he is also called, was not an apostle as were two of the other gospel writers, Matthew and John. Although he had not been one of Jesus' inner circle of disciples, he gathered and shaped an eyewitness account based on the teachings of his mentor, the apostle Peter.

Mark 4:24 in the Amplified Bible contains a word of encouragement for you as you begin this in-depth study of Mark's gospel:

And He said to them, “Be careful what you are hearing. The measure of thought and study you give to the truth you hear will be the measure of virtue and knowledge that comes back to you—and more besides will be given to you who hear.”

Lord, give us ears to hear!

WHAT TO EXPECT:

Each week you will have five days of homework to complete, spending time in both the Old and New Testaments. Each day you will find questions requiring you to think about the explicit and implicit meaning of the text, as well as questions about how the verse applies to your life specifically. The Bible is God's living Word to us, so you can confidently expect that he will use it to speak to you individually and profoundly.

Each week you will be meeting other members of the class in a flexible intergenerational group of 4 people who will vary each week. Your leader will tell you each week how to find your CrossWise group for an icebreaker question and then a short discussion of the first AQ(application question) of your weekly homework. Make sure to wear a name tag so you can get to know all members of your class.

I. ACTIVITY 1 – INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS (PRIOR KNOWLEDGE)

Take a few moments at the start of class to write your answers to the following:

- A. Write a short description of Jesus Christ. Include a list of the first five character traits that come to mind.
- B. What was the purpose of Jesus' life?
- C. How did Jesus spend his life here on earth?
- D. Which describes you most accurately?
- Although I have heard of Jesus and am interested in learning more about his life, I have never read the Bible.
 - I was raised in church or Sunday school so I know lots of Bible stories, but I have not really spent much time reading the Bible on my own.
 - I am a Christ-follower and I regularly read portions of the Bible for my devotions, but have never read or studied the whole Bible.
 - I am an avid student of both the Old and New Testaments and have read the entire Bible at least once. I believe the Bible is the Word of God.
 - Other _____

Group members will briefly share their answers with the person sitting next to them.

II. ACTIVITY 2 – GROUP QUESTIONS

Divide members into flexible CrossWise groups of 4 (all with different color cards so that you have an intergenerational group) and assign each group one of the following scriptural references on the life of Mark.

Take a few minutes with your group to discuss and list your observations about the implications of the passage you've been assigned. You will then choose a spokesperson to share your insights with the entire group about how this verse will help us to understand Mark's life and writing.

Verses	Your Verse Your Insights
1. Acts 12:12	Your Verse: _____ Your Insights:
2. Acts 12:25	
3. Acts 13:5	
4. Acts 13:13	
5. Acts 15:36-39	
6. Colossians 4:10	
7. 2 Timothy 4:11	
8. Philemon 24	
9. 1 Peter 5:13	
10. Mark 14:48-51*	

*Note that Mark never identifies himself as the writer of this book; scholars believe he is referring to himself in this one passage.

III. ACTIVITY 3 – INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS (REFLECTION)

After the group discussion of the preceding verses, take a few minutes to write your answers to the following questions:

A. What characteristics stand out to you most from the preceding verses?

B. What impact does Mark have on the lives of others?

C. What do you notice about the influence of older Christians/mentors in his life?

D. What are Mark's giftings?

E. What are the turning points in his life?

IV. ACTIVITY 4 – SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Now is the time to meet with your regularly assigned small group. You will meet with this group each week to discuss your homework and to pray for one another. You may want to especially emphasize the application questions.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

AQ1. Have you ever mistrusted someone who once failed you? Were they able to rebuild trust? How do you imagine Mark felt after the incident that caused Paul and Barnabas to separate?

AQ2. What do you learn about Barnabas from Acts 4:36? What does his name mean? Have you ever had a Barnabas in your life?

AQ3: What lessons can you learn from this exploration of Mark's life? What do you find encouraging or inspiring?

V. ACTIVITY 5 - ONGOING ASSIGNMENT

The **three charts** at the back of your book will be an ongoing project to help you organize the themes in Mark. You will be looking at Jesus' life to see the heart of God, the mind of God, and the strength of God.

EXAMPLE CHART

Chart 1: THE HEART OF GOD

As you read Mark, notice the strong feelings Jesus experiences and expresses, and fill in the information in the chart below.

Verse	Situation	Jesus' Feelings	Jesus' Words	AQ Comments*
				<p><i>*Your Application Questions based on these charts after each lesson will be:</i></p> <p>AQ1. Did anything surprise you here?</p> <p>AQ2. How has your view of Jesus changed or been expanded based on your reading this week?</p>

V. ACTIVITY 6 - GET TO KNOW

In your small group, take time to share something about yourself and then record each other's email addresses and prayer requests on the pages provided.

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LESSON 1

Homework

*“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near.
Repent and believe the good news!”*

Mark 1:15

DAY ONE

AQ1: What was the most significant thing you learned from the introductory lesson? What drew you to this study? What do you hope will be the result of the time you will be investing.

1. Read Mark 1:1-20, Matthew 3:1-11 and Luke 3:2-16.
 - a. What is the setting for the first scene in Mark? What event is occurring?

 - b. What background information is given so that we understand what is taking place?

 - c. What was prophesied about John the Baptist at his birth? See Luke 1:76-77. What was God's specific plan and calling for John's life?

AQ2: Do you believe God has a specific plan or calling for your life? What light do the following verses shed?

Jeremiah 1:5

Galatians 1:15

Jeremiah 29:11

Philippians 2:13

AQ3: Do you have a “life verse” that expresses what you believe to be God’s calling, direction, or purpose for your life? If you have never thought about this, pray this week and ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to a specific Bible verse.

DAY TWO

1. How does John fulfill the prophesy in Isaiah 40:3-5? How can we echo the ministry of John?
2. Describe John. Is he the kind of person you would expect great crowds to travel to the desert in droves to see? What might this teach us about the people God chooses to use and the way in which he works?
3. Combined with Zechariah 4:6, what comfort can you take from this passage as you view your own calling?
4. From the Mark passage, what is John's message concerning Jesus?
5. Combining the three gospel accounts, what is John's advice or warning to each of the groups he addresses? Which message speaks to you most directly?