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Supernatural Power

Stories from Mark’s Gospel

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Week 3 | Mark 3

### Chapter 3 Summary:

“In light of the threat from the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus ‘withdraws’ with his disciples. He appoints the Twelve ‘to be with him’ and ‘to be sent’ to proclaim the gospel and to embody the gospel by driving out demons. Jesus also indicates the character of his new family: they are those who do the will of God.”[[1]](#footnote-2)

# Day 1

## Read

### Mark 3:1–6 (NIV)

**3** Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.”

4Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent.

5He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

## Study

* Jesus’ opponents are watching him closely. Apparently, they do not question his ability to heal, but are hoping to discredit him if he heals on the Sabbath when it was unlawful to work. Jesus could have waited to heal the man, but to Jesus, “To delay healing for a day is to deny the Torah’s true intention, which is the glory of God and the benefit of man. By their attitude the Pharisees destroy life rather than save it; by neglecting opportunities to do good they do harm. It is therefore they who are the sabbath breakers, and Jesus himself who fulfils the Torah which commands men to do good.” [[2]](#footnote-3)
* Between 2:1 and 3:6 we witness five confrontations between Jesus and the Pharisees. In the verses above, we see their opposition to Jesus intensify. “Initially they had come to check him out, but here they are resolutely against him. The opening episode (2:1–12) ends with everyone praising God, while this one closes with the Pharisees and Herodians plotting to kill the one they both perceive as a threat.”[[3]](#footnote-4)

## Think about

A lot of people think that what they need is proof before they can believe in Jesus. Yet, even when confronted with irrefutable evidence of his supernatural power, the Jewish religious leaders not only rejected Jesus, but wanted him dead. Why? And are their reasons still apparent today?

Then and now, opposition to Jesus comes for all kinds of reasons. At the root, it’s rarely about the need for rational proof. Jesus challenges our understanding of the world and our place in it. He demands that we live differently. Jesus forced the Pharisees to rethink what they believed about God and challenged their position and hold on power. No doubt, there are people who oppose Jesus for that same reason today. Even if faced with a miracle, their stubborn hearts would reject him.

Yet, there are many who are like the man with the shriveled hand. They are longing to experience the goodness of a Savior who sees them and their pain and who will act on their behalf. Those of us who’ve already experienced his goodness can be witnesses to just how loving our Savior is.

## Pray

Pray that the Spirit will give you the privilege of having others experience Christ through you. Pray for those whose hearts are hard, those who simply need to know that God really does love them, and everyone in between. Invite Jesus into your conversations and pray that he will reveal himself to those who need him.

# Day 2

## Read

### Mark 3:7–12 (NIV)

7Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. 8When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. 9Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. 10For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. 11Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.” 12But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.

## Study

* To learn more about the regions where the crowds came from, check out the [Faithlife Bible Study notes on 3:8.](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mk3.8)
* “Much like the crowds who were ‘falling over’ Jesus wherever he went, when the ‘impure spirits’ saw him they ‘fell down’ (*prospiptō*) before him. They recognize his identity as the ‘Son of God,’ and their bowing portrays Jesus as sharing in God’s sovereignty over demonic spirits….This passage concludes with Jesus’s strict refusal to allow the impure spirits to reveal his identity. Once again, the unclean spirits grasp Jesus’s identity, though this recognition has no redemptive power. Yet in the human realm, even among his disciples, the need remains to have Jesus’s identity and mission clarified.”[[4]](#footnote-5)

## Think about

Jesus’s ministry had a powerful effect in both the human (vv. 8–10) and demonic realms (vv. 11–12). “The dramatic language in this passage captures the disruption caused by the arrival of the kingdom of God.”[[5]](#footnote-6)

These spirits know when they are in the presence of a power greater than themselves. “They recognize in Jesus, not just a great healer, but a spiritual power and presence of an altogether different order from themselves. And so they yell out Jesus’ real identity, which, so far as we know, the crowds hadn’t yet imagined, and even the disciples had perhaps only begun to guess at.”[[6]](#footnote-7)

Once again we see Mark emphasizing Jesus’ authority and giving the hearers of his Gospel yet another reason to believe that Jesus is truly the Messiah and Son of God.

## Pray

The crowds were desperate to get to Jesus because they believed that he could help them. Ask the Spirit to draw you close to Jesus today as you admit your need of him. Bring all your requests to Jesus — big and small — and rest in the knowledge that he receives them all.

# Day 3

## Read

### Mark 3:13–17 (NIV)

13Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15and to have authority to drive out demons. 16These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), 17James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”), 18Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot 19and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

## Study

Early hearers of Mark’s Gospel would have found significance in Jesus visiting a mountainside and appointing twelve disciples. In the Hebrew Scriptures, mountains were often sites of God encounters (Exodus 3:1, 19:1–25; 1 Kings 19:1–18) and Israel had twelve tribes. “That Jesus calls twelve of his followers to be sent on his behalf points to their being a ‘reconstituted Israel.’ It is not the case that they replace Israel or that what eventually becomes the church replaces Israel. Jesus is calling historic Israel to return to God in faithfulness, which means becoming a people of justice and a light to the nations. At the same time, Jesus is performing Israel’s role in acting justly and, throughout this section and beyond, reaching out to the gentiles.[[7]](#footnote-8)

## Think about

When Jesus calls the twelve, he renames three of them, “an action that often goes along with God’s call and special appointment in the biblical story.”[[8]](#footnote-9) Names are closely associated with identity in the Bible. God changes Abram’s name to “Abraham” and Jacob’s to “Israel.”

That Jesus gives Simon the name, Peter (rock) and James and John, Boanerges (sons of thunder) speaks of his intimacy with them and his plans for them. These three men will be close to Jesus during his life and strong and powerful witnesses for him after his death and resurrection.

## Pray

Whatever name your parents gave you, you are called “beloved,” “son” or “daughter,” “disciple,” and “friend” by Jesus. You are known and loved by your Savior. Rejoice in your identity as a child of God today. Choose to believe what he says about you. Ask him to reveal his plans for you and decide to answer his call, wherever it may lead.

# Day 4

*We’re having some great discussions about Mark’s Gospel on the Pastor’s Pregame Podcast. You can listen at* [*CFhome.org/pregame*](https://subsplash.com/christfellowship-tx/lb/ms/+hg732gk) *or through* [*Apple Podcasts*](https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/pastors-pregame/id1582563644)*. New episodes every Thursday!*

## Read

### Mark 3:20–30 (NIV)

20Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

22And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

23So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? 24If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. 27In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house. 28Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, 29but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.” 30He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.”

## Study

* The Faithlife Study Bible notes have a helpful explanation of both the word “family” used in verse 21 and why they may have reacted as they did. Read the notes on [Mark 3:21](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mk3.21).
* Here is how Gombis explains what it means to “blaspheme the Holy Spirit”: “Blasphemy in Scripture is abusive speech that denigrates or defames other people (1 Tim 6:4), God (Rom 2:24), or angels (2 Pet 2:10–12). At his baptism the Spirit descended upon Jesus, and God ripped apart the heavens to enter the world and initiate his kingdom work through Jesus (Mark 1:10). To witness the effects of this divine invasion and say that Satan is at work is to defame the Holy Spirit.”

“In v. 29, Jesus indicates that if the teachers of the law continue in this conviction, their sin has eternal consequences. If they turn from their opinion and respond positively to Jesus at this point, they can find forgiveness. But to observe what is happening and conclude that Satan is at work rather than God is damnable. *While people can find forgiveness for any other sin they commit, to maintain this opinion to the point of settled conviction makes them ‘guilty of an eternal sin.*’”[[9]](#footnote-10)

## Think about

“Jesus, God’s appointed agent of bringing in God’s life-giving rule, is freeing people from demonic possession and bringing healing with the spread of God’s kingdom presence. His point here is that they are drawing the wrong conclusion if they think he is in league with Satan. The obvious lesson they should learn is that the only way he can be driving out demons is if he has in some sense already defeated Satan. That is, if he is plundering the strong man’s house, then he must have already broken into his house and subdued him.”

“The “plunder” here is people: Jesus is snatching individuals from the enslaving grip of demonic possession, sickness, and even greed, in the case of Levi (Mark 2:13–17). The teachers of the law witness Jesus casting out demons, and they should draw the sensible conclusion that he is doing this because he has already triumphed over the strong man, Satan.”[[10]](#footnote-11)

## Pray

The pride and stubbornness of the Pharisees led them to reject the Messiah and then go so far as to associate him with the dark powers he’d come to defeat. Their example should serve as a warning. Pray that you would have a soft heart that is open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Pray for eyes that see the movement of God in our world and the will to follow Jesus.

# Day 5

## Read

### Mark 3:31–35 (NIV)

31Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

33“Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.

34Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 35Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

## Study

According to commentator David Garland, “Jesus’ response to the visit from his family would have been a shocker because it runs counter to the received wisdom of the age. The family was the basis of social and economic life and the source of one’s identity. In the first-century Mediterranean world, an individual’s identity was basically that of a member of a group (dyadic personal identity). The genealogies and laws relating to family life in the Scriptures show the importance of membership in a family or clan (and village). In the Old Testament, “life” is used almost interchangeably with ‘family.’ One’s family was one’s life, and to reject family or to be cast out of the family was to lose one’s life (see Luke 14:26).”

“But Jesus affirms that life under God is not defined by relationships in a biological family, which was primarily geared for the preservation of the family line, its wealth, and its honor. One’s ultimate devotion is owed to God, who is head of a new divine family, and becoming a member of this family is open to all persons regardless of race, class, or gender. The only requirement is that they share Jesus’ commitment to God.” [[11]](#footnote-12)

## Think about

As N.T. Wright reminds us, “How easy it is to slide back again into a sense of belonging, of group identity, that comes from something other than loyalty to Jesus. We substitute longstanding friendship, membership in the same group, tribe, family, club, party, social class or whatever it may be. But the call to be ‘around’ Jesus, to listen to him, even if ‘those outside’ think us crazy, is what matters. The church in every generation, and in every place, needs to remember this and act on it.”[[12]](#footnote-13)

## Pray

As you reflect back on [Mark 2](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Mk2), pray over your commitment to Jesus. Is it to him whom you give your primary allegiance? Are you willing to reach out to him for healing as the man with the shriveled hand did, follow him as the disciples did, and stand with him even when challenged? Pray over your answers.

1. Timothy G. Gombis, [Mark](https://ref.ly/logosres/strygdcm62mk?ref=Page.p+19&off=446&ctx=Mark+3:7%E2%80%9335%0a~In+light+of+the+threat+from+), ed. Scot McKnight and Tremper Longman III, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Morna D. Hooker, [*The Gospel according to Saint Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/black62mk?ref=Bible.Mk3.3-4&off=860&ctx=his+whole+ministry.+~To+delay+healing+for), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1991), 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Gombis, 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Timothy G. Gombis, [*Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/strygdcm62mk?ref=Bible.Mk3.7-12&off=4551&ctx=remains+much+to+do.%0a~Jesus%E2%80%99s+ministry+had), ed. Scot McKnight and Tremper Longman III, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Gombis,109. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Tom Wright, [*Mark for Everyone*](https://ref.ly/logosres/evry62mk?ref=Bible.Mk3.7-19&off=3096&ctx=+a+human+being.%0aBut+~these+spirits+know+w) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Timothy G. Gombis, [Mark](https://ref.ly/logosres/strygdcm62mk?ref=Bible.Mk3.13-19&off=4200&ctx=+for+a+unique+task.%0a~That+Jesus+calls+twe), ed. Scot McKnight and Tremper Longman III, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Gombis, 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Timothy G. Gombis, [*Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/strygdcm62mk?ref=Bible.Mk3.22-30&off=4370&ctx=t+the+Holy+Spirit.%E2%80%9D+~Blasphemy+in+Scriptu), ed. Scot McKnight and Tremper Longman III, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Timothy, 123–124. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. David E. Garland, [*Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nivac62mk?ref=Bible.Mk3.20-35&off=2606&ctx=d+become+outsiders.%0a~Jesus%E2%80%99+response+to+t), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Tom Wright, [*Mark for Everyone*](https://ref.ly/logosres/evry62mk?ref=Bible.Mk3.31-35&off=3523&ctx=%E2%80%99t+got+the+message.%0a~How+easy+it+is+to+sl) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)