

# Adult Teaching Resources

February 21, 2021



## Season of Epiphany

Mark 1:29-39—"Jesus, the Traveler"

Mark 9:2-9—"Jesus, the Dazzler"

## Season of Lent

**Mark 1:9-15—"Jesus, the Preacher"**

Mark 8:31-38—"Jesus, the Challenger"

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# “Jesus, the Preacher”

Mark 1:9-15

## FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### Opening

After everyone arrives, give each person a pen and a piece of paper. Ask everyone to write a one sentence “sermon” proclaimer their understanding of the good news? What truth fits into one sentence that summarizes the message of Jesus?

Give everyone time to think and write. Then, collect all the sermons and share them, one at a time. As each sermon is shared, ask the class for their response and reaction.

Spend some time in conversation about the common themes that come up and discuss the outlier themes that are important.

Have the large group work together to create a group one-sentence sermon that works for everyone in the class.

### Reading the Bible

Where did Jesus come from? (Nazareth of Galilee)

What did John do? (baptized Jesus in the Jordan)

What happened when he came out of the water? (he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.)

What did the voice from heaven say? (“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”)

What did the Spirit immediately do to Jesus? (drove him out into the wilderness)

What happened to Jesus there? (he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan)

Who was with him? (wild beasts)

Who waited on him? (the angels)

When did Jesus come to Galilee proclaiming the good news? (after John was arrested)

What was Jesus’ message? (The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.)

## Making Connections

What is your baptism story? When did it happen? Where did it happen? What do you remember about that event?

How much of who you are is a product of where you grew up? Where did you grow up? How did that location help shape you?

What's the best "warm-up" act you've ever heard? How did that person/group prepare you for the main event?

What is the best affirmation you have received? What were you doing? Who spoke the affirming words? What was the affirmation? How did those words affect you?

How does your church set apart, or identify, individuals for specific ministry? What education or training is required? What ministries do you set them apart for?

When have you faced strong temptation? How long did that season of temptation last? How did you handle it?

Who are your "helpers" in times of trial and temptation? How have they helped you in the past?

Our Lesson Writer says, "Perhaps the hard days of temptation were necessary for building the physical, emotional, and psychological strength Jesus would need to carry out an intense ministry that would involve long days, demanding crowds, stubborn disciples, painful rejection, and an inglorious crucifixion." What do you think is the purpose for us facing and enduring hard days of temptation?

What is the good news? How often do you proclaim it?

## So What?

Remaining in the large group, remind everyone that Mark's account of Jesus' life and ministry is different than the other three gospels. Mark moves quickly and skips over many of the important stories of Jesus' birth and younger years. Mark has a story to tell and he tells it quickly because time is of the essence.

Ask each person to think about everything going on in their life, in the community, and in the world right now. If time is of the essence, and if the author of Mark were writing their faith story, what great need is waiting for each of your members to meet? What must they do to act and act quickly? What would they consider success with their mission?

Give everyone time to think about their life and their opportunity. Then, have volunteers share what they think God needs them to do, and do quickly.

Spend time listening to everyone, and then encourage your members to do one thing this next week to begin following through on what God is calling them to do.

Remind them that sometimes the best sermon isn't spoken with words, it's shared with actions.

## The Challenge

This week, take one step to do the thing you feel God is calling you to do for the world right now.

## Prayer

*Loving God, when Mark wrote about Jesus, he didn't waste any time or any words. Jesus got busy quickly to preach the good news. Open our hearts and minds to the same urgency to get busy and get busy quickly for the sake of your kingdom. Amen.*

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Baptizing with power**—Mark has John say that Jesus would baptize “with the Holy Spirit” (1:8), but Matthew and Luke quote John as saying Jesus would baptize “with water and with fire” (Mat. 3:11 and Lu. 3:16). Since both Greek and Hebrew can use the same word for “wind” and “spirit,” some scholars postulate that the word “Holy” was a secondary addition to “spirit” in Mark, and that the original intent of John’s saying was that Jesus would baptize with “wind and fire.” The combination may be an indication of judgment, but is particularly reminiscent of Pentecost, at which the coming of the Spirit was marked by the sound of wind and by “tongues of fire” above the heads of the disciples (Acts 2:1-4). Pentecostal believers often speak of a baptism in the Spirit as a second baptism.

**Who heard?**—The account of the heavenly voice reminds the reader that, even as Christ proclaimed his humanity, God declared Jesus’ divinity. But who heard those words? Mark implies that it might have been a private conversation: “he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice from heaven, ‘You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:11).

Matthew and Luke write from the standpoint of an observer, as if everyone could hear and describe the divine annunciation. Luke keeps the second person address (“You are my beloved son”), but Matthew’s longer account puts it in third person, as if God were making an announcement to all: “This is my son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22, Matt. 3:17).

**Why the dove?**—The imagery of God being represented by a dove is somewhat obscure. Doves were used in the Old Testament as sacrificial offerings, and a dove assisted Noah in finding dry land, but neither of those seems to relate here. A rabbinic tradition held that when God “brooded over the waters” (Gen. 1:2), it was in the form of a dove, and we have some small evidence of another tradition that likened the voice of God to the cooing of a dove.

For whatever reason, the gospels insist that God chose the dove as a means of self-revelation. The most important thing, however, is not what was seen, but what was heard. “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (v. 11).

**The wilderness**—The word translated as “wilderness” could describe a desert place, a wild place, or even a deserted place, as in Mark 1:35, where Jesus sought a quiet place to pray. Here it suggests a wilderness or desert area, and there is no lack of wilderness in the Dead Sea area. A healthy person can survive without food for 40 days (barely), but not without water, and Mark points to the presence of “wild beasts,” so we’re led to imagine Jesus passing long and hungry days in a wild and untamed area, but with access to water.

## Digging Deeper *continued*

Matthew and Luke both contain stories of Satan taking Jesus to a high mountain and to the highest part of the temple complex, but these were probably intended to be visionary rather than physical.

An old tradition claims that Jesus spent the time on a bare mountain near Jericho. Today it is called the Mountain of Temptation and home to both a rustic monastery and a fancy restaurant that can only be reached by an aerial sky lift. Near the foot of the mountain, adjacent to the tel of ancient Jericho, is the “Temptation Café,” where the food is indeed quite tempting.



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**Angelic provision**—Mark’s account of angels caring for Jesus recalls stories of how God provided for Elijah—who would have been in the same wild area near the Jordan—by sending ravens to bring him food (1 Kings 17:6).

**Different stories**—The Fourth Gospel offers a different picture of Jesus’ early ministry. As we saw in our recent lesson from John 1:43-51, that writer depicts Jesus as remaining in the south for some period and even taking on some of John’s disciples before he returned to Galilee.

**Good news**—We translate *euangelion* as “good news” because the prefix *eu-* means “good,” while *angelion*—the root of our word “angel” (messenger)—means “message.” In secular Greek, *euangelion* was used to proclaim the good news of military victories or to announce the emperor’s birthday. In scripture, it is the good news of salva-tion in Jesus Christ. It is because Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John declare such good news that we call them “gospels” rather than “biographies of Jesus.”

# The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

## Where did Jesus go to meet John?

We often fail to appreciate some aspects of Jesus' life, and Mark's abbreviated telling of the story moves so quickly that we may fail to even ask some questions that might arise. For example, Mark says that "Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan." Writing many years later and anxious to get to the point, he doesn't bother to point out how much effort it took for Jesus to get there, or even where he went.

Jesus' long walk probably took him southeast from the hill country around Nazareth and into the Jezreel Valley, past Mount Tabor and down a wadi road to the river Jordan, then south along the Jericho road until he reached the place where John was baptizing. That place, which the Fourth Gospel identifies as "Bethany Beyond the Jordan," is today known as *Al-Maghdas* in Arabic ("place of baptizing"), or *Qasr el-Jehud* in Hebrew ("Tower of the Jews"). It is located east of Jericho, just a few miles north of where the Jordan empties into the Dead Sea.

The walk would have covered nearly 80 miles, likely taking at least four days, taking Jesus from more than 1100 feet above sea level in Nazareth to the same distance or below. The baptism site is just a few miles north of the Dead Sea, the lowest elevation in the world at minus 1400 feet.

The likely site of Jesus' baptism was marked by Christian symbols in sandstone walls as early as the first century. Churches were built there into the Byzantine period, but in time the site was lost, to be rediscovered during mine-clearing operations after the Six-Day War.

The river appears to have moved west from its earlier channel since that time, but the remains

of early shrines (right covered by modern shelters) included steps leading down into the now dry riverbed. Since I took the photo at right in 2006, the the old channel has been formed into a pool so that waters from a natural spring fill it with fresh water.



After careful archaeological work, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan began developing the area about 20 years ago as a place for worship, pilgrimage, and tourism. Although Jordan is

## The Hardest Question *continued*

a predominantly Muslim country, the site contains several orthodox churches and even a rustic structure for outdoor worship that was dedicated to the Baptist World Alliance.



A riverside platform (left) offers a spot for pilgrim baptisms, though the water is muddy and shallow due to extensive irrigation upstream. Both sewage and agricultural runoff contribute to the river's flow, which is why virtually all Protestant pilgrims prefer to visit the fresh waters at Jardenit, a site for pilgrims built much closer to the Sea of Galilee. In Jesus' day, the river would have been wider and fresher.

After the Jordanian site gained popularity, the Israeli government cleared mines on the west side of the river and built a competing pilgrimage site with much nicer access to the river, calling it Qasr al-Jahud. The site is particularly popular with Greek, Russian, and Ukrainian Orthodox Christians, who wear thin baptismal robes they will not wash, but save to be buried in (right).

The Jordan river, which currently serves as the border between Israel and Jordan, is no more than 10 yards wide at that point, and barely waist deep.

Orthodox pilgrims typically bend their knees and go straight down into the water, often baptizing themselves—always three times in succession.

Pilgrims from both Israel and Jordan can seek baptism in the same waters within easy sight of each other, both beneath the watchful eyes of gun-bearing soldiers.

