

THE SURPRISING JESUS

Studies in the Book of Mark

~Week Four~ “Christ the Controversialist” Mark 3:7-35



Life Groups

We continue our study of the book of Mark entitled “The Surprising Jesus.” Whether you work through these studies on your own, with a friend, or with a UPC Life Group, they will help you develop a HEAD that enjoys God’s truth, a HEART of love for God and neighbor, and HANDS eager to serve the King.

A reminder... These weekly studies are connected to the Sunday sermons at UPC. On Sunday morning you will hear a sermon on a passage from the book of Mark. The study guide includes a “Look Back” section to help you reflect on the sermon, and a “Look Up” section to take you through the NEXT passage in the book of Mark. If you miss a sermon, you can always listen to it online at www.upc-orlando.com.

LOOK BACK – Mark 2:18-3:6

This section of Mark’s gospel describes the increasing suspicion and hostility of the Jewish religious leaders toward Jesus. In three separate incidents, it becomes clear that Jesus is not the kind of Messiah the Jews were expecting.

a) The first incident (Mark 2:18-22) pits Jesus against those who wondered why He didn’t make His disciples fast. Hidden in their question in verse 18 is an accusation. What is it? (Hint: see Luke 5:33)

b) Is there anything wrong with fasting *per se*, according to Jesus? If not, why did Jesus not impose a fast on his followers, as did the Pharisees and even John the Baptist?

c) The second incident (Mark 2:23-28) has Jesus getting accused of breaking the Sabbath. What had He and His followers done wrong, in the eyes of the Pharisees? Why did the Pharisees view this as breaking the Sabbath?

d) The final incident (Mark 3:1-6) again concerns Jesus’ use of the Sabbath. What made Jesus so angry with the Pharisees on this occasion?

LOOK UP – Mark 3:7-35

It did not take long for Jesus of Nazareth to become a highly polarizing figure. It seems people either loved or hated Him. The unavoidable question then and now is, “What will you do with the man called Jesus?”

Mark 3:7-12 – Jesus Draws Followers

a) What motivated these crowds to cross sea and land to find Jesus?

b) What do you find surprising about Jesus’ instruction to the evil spirits not to tell anyone who He was (verse 12)?

Mark 3:13-19 – Jesus Calls Followers

a) What did Jesus do before He identified His twelve disciples? (Hint: see Luke’s account in Luke 6:12-15) What is instructive about that for you?

b) Look at the disciples’ “job description” in verses 14-15. What is significant about the order in which Jesus puts the three parts of this job description?

Mark 3:20-30 – Jesus Alienates Followers

a) What would have been particularly painful for Jesus about the accusation of verse 21, “He is out of His mind”?

b) Why do you think His family members were so concerned?

c) Put into your own words Jesus’ reply to the accusation of the religious leaders that He was demon-possessed (verses 23-29).

- d) **Author's note on verse 29:** What is the "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit"? "It is the Pharisees' action which defines this sin. They stubbornly persist in the action of calling that which is good 'evil,' to preserve their own power and authority.... It is not an isolated instance of calling good 'evil' which is considered blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, but a persistent attitude. Those who have committed this sin have consistently refused the Spirit's powerful help in recognizing the truth about Jesus" (T. Keller).

Mark 3:31-35 – Jesus Defines Followers

- a) What do you find encouraging or comforting about Jesus' words in verses 34-35?

- b) How do these verses help us avoid the sin of sectarian pride?

LOOK IN – Reflect

- a) When it comes to Jesus Christ, there can be no indifference. Read Revelation 3:14-16 in light of this week's Scripture passage. Honestly, where are you on the spiritual continuum: cold, lukewarm, or hot?

- b) If your answer was anything less than "hot," what are you going to do about it, beginning today?

LOOK OUT – Apply

Never forget that the first task to which Jesus calls disciples is "that they might be with Him" (Mark 3:14). Service grows out of relationship; otherwise it becomes mere duty. Have you been with Jesus lately, in a meaningful and personal way? If not, reserve time this week when you will do nothing more than reconnect with Jesus. What will that look like for you?