

Repent and Believe

Mark 1:14-28

Pastor Bryan Clark

According to Genesis chapter 1 this great God created the universe with a spoken word, which included a garden paradise that He called Eden. He created Adam and Eve and placed them in this perfect environment where they literally had it all. In Genesis chapter 3 the tempter comes along to try to lure Adam and Eve away from God. But it really raises the question “How do you tempt someone who has it all?” Well, the strategy was very interesting. He began by questioning the goodness of God: *God isn't really as good as you think He is.* What was implied in that was that perhaps there is more to life outside of God's limits and restrictions, that maybe God isn't as good as you think He is. For whatever reason, that message penetrated the heart of Adam and Eve and they began to think about that.

It was followed by the lie that you can be your own god; you can run your own life; you can decide for yourself what is good and evil. When Adam and Eve began to question the goodness of God, they thought, *You know, maybe it would be better if I were my own god and I ran my own life.* They sinned against God, and paradise was lost. Basically, through the rest of the Bible and on into the present day, that has been the battle.

Satan is a very clever enemy, but he's not terribly creative. His strategy really hasn't changed over these thousands of years. He questions the goodness of God. He causes us to think that maybe God isn't as good as He says He is, and maybe there's more life that can be lived outside of God and His plan and His purpose. And if God isn't as good as He says He is, then maybe we need to be our own gods and run our own lives and fulfill our own needs. So that's the way most people live.

This isn't just true of unbelievers; it's a struggle with us as Christians. According to an ABC news poll in 2002, 83 percent of Americans consider themselves to be Christians. Now we would say that, without question, an overwhelming majority of those people still have no clue what it means to be a Christ-follower. They identify themselves as Christians, but they really don't understand what it means to surrender to Christ and to follow Him. A recent Barna poll indicated that out of that 83 percent who call themselves Christians, only 4 percent actually have a biblical worldview—which Barna defines basically as just affirming the basic doctrines of Christianity.¹ There's a huge gap between those who consider themselves to be Christian and those who really understand and affirm what it means to be a Christ-follower.

So what does it mean to be a follower of Christ? Mark is going to help us with that from our study of his Gospel. Last week, Mark opened up his Gospel with quite a spectacular introduction, where he introduces us to both who Jesus is and His mission. He tells us that Jesus is the Savior. He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. He tells us that He is a member of the Trinity. He is God Himself in the flesh. He tells us that Jesus is the long-awaited One that was spoken of in the Law and the Prophets. Jesus is Yahweh and Elohim from the Old Testament.

Jesus is so great that John the Baptist isn't even fit to untie His sandals. And He's embarking on a mission that is so spectacular that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all showed up together to launch this mission. It was a mission so powerful that Satan himself showed up to try to detour Jesus from His mission. It was a mission so great that the beasts of

the field gathered around just so they could watch it, and the angels of heaven came down so they could be a part of it.

So what happens when a God this great becomes flesh and launches a mission of this significance? Well, that's what Mark teaches us in the following passage. Nobody knows exactly how much time lapsed between the end of verse 13 and the beginning of verse 14. We know it had to have been months. As a matter of fact, in the Gospel of John much of the detail of what happened in this time gap is recorded there. But for Mark's purpose he says nothing of it. Some believe it could have been as much as a year between verse 13 and verse 14. Verse 14:

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (vs. 14-15, *NASB)

John has been arrested and Jesus moves up to the northern part of the kingdom in the area referred to as Galilee. It helps to look at a map of the area to get a little bit of perspective as to where this is. Find the Dead Sea and then the Jordan River, which goes to the north, and then there's the little Sea of Galilee. Right on the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee you find the city of Capernaum. That was home base for Jesus through much of what's called His Galilean ministry.

Now I don't know what comes to your mind when you think of Galilee. A lot of people think of it as a rural quiet area. But listen to how one historian described first-century Galilee:

Galilee was the center of a humming political and commercial life. It stood at the crossroads of the nations of the ancient world, through which the armies and the traders and the diplomats passed. There some of the greatest battles of the world had been fought. Galilee was the home of a thoroughly cosmopolitan population. Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic would all be heard in the markets. Syrian, Jew, Roman and Parthian mixed freely. It was the land of passing excitements and dangerous fashions, of barbarous dialect and offensive manners.

- Stuart Blanch, *Encounters with Jesus* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1988)

We would say today that Galilee was a "happening place." This was a place with a lot of excitement, a lot of life. And this is where Jesus launches His public ministry.

It says Jesus is "preaching the gospel of God." It's very important to remind ourselves that "gospel" means "good news." As we read through this Gospel, we want to keep asking ourselves the question, *What makes this good news?* The enemy is just subtle enough that he has caused us to doubt the goodness of God, and sometimes the message sounds like bad news, because Jesus calls us to commitment. But we have to keep reminding ourselves, *Wait a minute, this is good news*, and ask ourselves, *Why is that? What makes this good news?* It's the good news of God. It's the message from God, about God...and it's good news!

He says "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." In the Greek language there are two words for "time." One is the word from which we get our English word "chronology." It's an ordinary word that means just the passing of time—from minutes to hours to days. But there's another word that is the word that's used here. It means a quality of time, a season of time. Mark isn't just saying that it was time for Jesus to start. He's saying God had brought everything together to the perfect fulfillment of time for Jesus to announce the kingdom of God was at hand. Some of the Gospel writers refer to it as the kingdom of heaven. They're really talking about the same thing.

When we hear the language “kingdom of God,” we think of that in spiritual terms. It’s hard for us to understand the implications of that because we don’t live in a monarchy; we live in a democracy. And as good as democracy is for a government, it raises certain issues with us about authority. If we don’t like who is in authority, we vote them out. But a kingdom isn’t like that. These people would have understood that a kingdom means that the king is in charge: the king makes the rules; the king breaks the rules; the king establishes whatever needs to be established. And there isn’t anything you do about that. You just surrender to the will of the king. That’s the way a monarchy works.

So when Jesus is announcing “the kingdom of God,” there is an immediate understanding that this is a kingdom and Jesus is the King. Jesus is in charge: He’s going to run the kingdom.

One of the dangers when living in a democracy is that we start to take that same concept and apply it to our theology—as if God is kind of a democracy and let’s have a talk about this. But the kingdom of God is not a democracy; it’s a monarchy. God is in charge and that’s the way it works. That’s the message Jesus is announcing. And remember, that’s *good* news.

So he says “the kingdom of God is at hand.” How do we respond to that? We *repent* and *believe*. “Repent” means to change your mind. It’s actually a little bit more than that: to change your mind and to go a different direction. But you can’t change your mind in a vacuum. You have to have something that you believe: *Because I believe that, then I’m going to change my mind*. So those two concepts have to stay together.

When we think of repentance, we often think of repenting from gross offensive sin. Certainly that’s a part of it. But that’s just a small part of it. There’s much more to repentance than that. It’s really an understanding that when I doubt the goodness of God and I choose to become my own god, then I start to live my own life my own way. I start to think my own way. I start to define my own purpose in life. I start to define truth for myself. That’s very popular thinking in our culture today: that I can be the source of truth myself and that I have to trust myself to deal with the issues in life, because who else can you trust?

But when we’re talking about repentance we’re talking about, *Wait a minute, I need to change my thinking; I need to change my mind; I need to believe something different from that*. I need to think a whole new way to be a Christ-follower. That’s exactly what Mark talks about. He gives us three very specific areas where we need to change our thinking in order to respond to the mission of Jesus.

First of all, he says we need to change what we understand to be our purpose in life:

As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.
(vs. 16-20)

One of Mark’s favorite words is “immediately.” That’s what he says here: Jesus came along and *immediately* they responded. You have Peter and Andrew, who were probably more at the poor end of the fishing world: they were standing on the bank; they were throwing their

nets into the water. You have James and John, who were probably at the wealthier end of the fishing industry: they had a boat; they had servants. But Jesus called them all alike and called them to lay down their nets to become fishers of men. And Mark says immediately they dropped their nets and they followed.

What do you do when someone as great as Jesus—God in the flesh—calls you to become part of a mission as eternity-changing as His? Will you say, “Well, you know, I’ve got to think about that; I’m going to pray about that; I’m going to take six months and I’m going to pray about it and then I’ll have to make a decision”? Mark will have none of that. He says *immediately!* Mark is in a hurry through the whole Gospel. They dropped their nets; they followed.

Now we do know from the Gospel of John that this isn’t the first time that these men had encountered Jesus. They had had quite a discussion with Him. But Mark doesn’t find that relevant here. He’s moving right to the calling: to change their purpose in life and to live for something that lasts forever. And immediately they drop their nets and they follow.

There are probably some of you—maybe many of you—that at this point you know what’s coming. You start to squirm a little bit and maybe check out or get butterflies in your stomach, because somewhere along the way you’ve been convinced that God isn’t as good as He says He is. You think, *If I drop my nets and follow Him, if I surrender completely to Him...and you keep pushing that off. I know what He’s going to do. He’s going to stuff my pockets full of antibacterial wipes and He’s going to send me to India!* And you’re saying, “I don’t want to go to India! I just know that’s what He will do.” See, that’s a trust issue, where we just are not convinced God is as good as He says He is. *If I fully surrender—if I drop my net and follow Him—He’s going to ruin my life. So I’ve got to stay in charge; I’ve got to be my own god; I’m going to call the shots.*

It has been my experience over the years that most Christians are very frustrated in their Christian walk for just this reason: because they’re living with one foot in the kingdom of God and one foot in this world, and they’re unwilling to drop their nets and follow. There’s a part of them that wants to be a Christ-follower. But there’s a part of them that feels sure that, *If I do that, God is going to take advantage of me: He’s going to do something to me that’ll ruin my life.* So we hold back and we try to live in both worlds. That’s a miserable way to live.

It’s important to remember that Jesus’ message to these men was not bad news: “Men, I’ve got some bad news! Drop your nets and follow Me.” It was *good* news. What made it good news? Well, think about it this way. Let me take a little liberty to editorialize a bit on the passage. This is really what Jesus was saying to them: “Men, I know that you’ve been spending your life catching fish. I can tell because you *smell* like fish. All you basically do is you pay the bills and you survive day to day—and it’s no way to live. But how would you like to be part of something that will change eternity? How would you like to be a part of something that really matters? How would you like to be a part of something so significant that 2000 years from now people in Lincoln, Nebraska will actually name their children Peter, James, John and Andrew in honor of you because you were part of changing the world?” Does that sound like bad news to you?

That *is* what He said. Here we are, 2000 years later, and people are still naming their children John, Peter, Andrew, James—named after these poor fishermen who dropped their nets to be a part of changing the world.

Let's all get out a piece of paper and let's list every person we can remember that lived in the first century. Unless you are a great historian, that's going to be a short list. But you can put on your list, "Well, I'd say I remember Peter, James, John, Andrew...." Most of your lists would be the apostles, wouldn't they? Two thousand years later these are the people that were a part of something *so* spectacular that we remember who they are. Well, that was what Jesus was asking them to think about. He was asking them to drop their nets and to follow. And *immediately* that is what they did.

He goes on in verse 21:

They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (vs. 21-22)

Jesus went to Capernaum and *immediately* He went into the synagogue. The synagogue is not the temple; the synagogue is a completely different place. During the 400 silent years (which is what we call them), from the end of the book of Malachi to the beginning of the Gospels, is when the synagogue arose. The Hebrew people in that time period had a new passion for the Hebrew Scriptures and they wanted to learn what God had to say. They needed a place where the Scriptures could be read and taught, so they developed the synagogue. It was a place where the Scriptures were read; and then they were taught; and then they would pray. They typically met in the synagogue three days a week (Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays).

It was very common that if there was a visiting rabbi, that rabbi would be allowed to read the Scriptures that day and then give his teaching, his comments, on it. So Jesus went *immediately* to the synagogue; He was invited to read the Scriptures, and He commented...only what He said was so radically different than what these people heard from their scribes that they were amazed. The Greek word means "to be struck by a blow"—they had the wind knocked out of them! They were amazed at what Jesus said. They were stunned. It's interesting that Mark doesn't tell us what Jesus said. For his point here, he just wants us to know that it had such authority that these people were blown away.

When the rabbis would teach, what they would do is they would read the Scripture and then they would say, "Well, Rabbi, So and So thinks this passage means this, and Rabbi, So and So thinks it means this"—and they just quoted the opinions of other rabbis. The scribes themselves were experts in the law; they were the professors of the law; they would give their comments.

But when Jesus spoke, Jesus didn't quote other rabbis. Jesus spoke as one with authority. Jesus quoted Himself. He said, "This is *exactly* what this means." And they were stunned by that. They thought, *Who is this man that speaks with such authority?* There is a reminder in this that God is the voice of authority.

We live in a culture where people are searching for truth. There is a belief that there is no such thing as absolute truth; everything is relative and it's just kind of floating out there. But that isn't true at all. There is an absolute God and that God is truth. Therefore what He speaks is absolute truth. And He has not left us in the dark to guess about that. His voice is

heard in the pages of the Scriptures. Jesus was speaking as God because He *was* God. And today we understand that the Scriptures are the voice of God and this Book has to be our source of authority for matters of life and godliness. There is such a thing as absolute truth. God has spoken! It's very important that we understand that and we stand on that. This is the source.

Sometimes when I'm talking to people about different theological things, they'll say, "Well, I don't know if I believe that; that's not the way I was raised." Or they'll say, "That's not what my church taught. You know, I grew up as a Methodist...I grew up as a Presbyterian...I grew up as a Lutheran...I grew up as a Catholic...I grew up as an Adventist...I grew up as a Berean." It's irrelevant what the label is. We don't get our truth from our denomination. We don't get our truth from our experience or our traditions or our backgrounds. We get our truth from this Book. It doesn't matter if it's Berean, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic—whatever it is. What matters is, *What does this Book say?* This Book is the source of authority. We've got to constantly go back to the source of authority.

Sometimes people will ask me, "Are you Calvinistic or are you Arminian?" It's a fine question and I know what they're going for in that. But I've reached the point in my life where I won't answer it—because I don't take my doctrine from men. I'm not of Calvin; I'm not of Arminius; I'm not of Luther. I answer, "I'm a Biblicist. All I care about is what *this* Book says." And that's how I want to define my doctrine. *This* is my source, not Calvin. I'm not trying to convert people to Reformed theology; I'm not trying to convert people to dispensationalism or Lutheranism or anything else. I want people to be converted to Jesus Christ and I want people to understand this Book is the source of truth.

Perhaps you are involved in a ministry where you have an opportunity to teach—maybe as a LifeGroup leader or in children's ministry or youth ministry or college ministry or Titus Women or a one-on-one mentoring relationship. Even for your own quiet time, it's very important to remember this Book *must* be the primary textbook. Sometimes because we're intimidated by the Bible, we spend way too much time reading other books and studying other books and not enough time studying *the* Book. *This is* the textbook. *This must* be our primary source of study. This is our source of authority. Our source of authority is not other books that have been written by men and women.

You say, "Well, I don't even know how to study the Bible; I find it really intimidating." Fine, then take a class. We offer the Workman class to teach you how to study the Bible. During the year we offer one on Wednesday nights and one on Saturday nights—that will teach you how to study this Book. The Bible must be our source of authority.

But that isn't how I think naturally. Naturally I put great value in *my* opinion. Naturally I think *I* can define truth for myself. And that's why I have to repent of that. I have to change my mind and I have to believe that God is the source of truth, that God is the authority, that my mind must conform to His mind. I have to *repent* and *believe*.

So Mark is telling me that I need to understand that rather than living for myself, rather than living for my own will and my own desires—which is what comes naturally—I have to repent of that and I have to believe that His purpose is what matters and His calling is what matters. I'm going to drop my net and I'm going to follow Him. I believe that. And I also have to understand that it's not my opinion. It's not me that defines truth, but it's *God*. So I'm going to repent of that and I'm going to believe that God is the source of truth, and I'm going to follow that.

The story goes on:

Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” And Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

(vs. 23-28)

Jesus is in the synagogue, and suddenly there is a man with a demonic spirit that interrupts the service. How many times do you suppose that had happened in the past and they were powerless to do anything about it? Immediately the demon recognizes both Jesus’ humanity and His deity. “Jesus of Nazareth” is humanity; “Holy One of God” is deity.

It’s interesting to me that here we are 2000 years later and we’re still arguing about who Jesus was. The demons got it...just like that! This was God in the flesh. They knew that. And they also understood that there was nothing they could do to keep Jesus from taking authority over them. There was nothing they could do to fight back. That’s why he said, “What did You come to do?” They understood at that point that this was God in the flesh and they were had; they were done. They speak and Jesus tells them to be still. It’s the same thing He said to the storm: “Be still!” And He casts them out and it’s over with. Again the people are amazed; they’re stunned. *Who is this Man that not only teaches with this authority but has authority over these demonic spirits?*

In order to really understand how these people would have processed this, you have to understand that in the first century they saw demonic spirits involved in everything bad. If you had a disease, it was a demonic spirit; if you had a tragedy, it was a demonic spirit; if you had a mental illness, it was a demonic spirit. The demons were under every rock. They were responsible for everything. They understood there is nothing they could do about it; they just had to live with it. And it tortured these people.

Just to help you understand how desperate they were, they entered into a practice called trepanning. Basically that meant while the person was alive, if they reached a point of torture where they couldn’t stand it any longer, they would take a drill and literally drill a hole into their skull, hoping that the demonic spirits would escape out the hole. Now that doesn’t sound very pleasant. But it gives you some idea of the level of desperation they lived with.

Historians have gone back and dug up the cemeteries from the first century and found about five percent of the skulls had a hole drilled in them. I mean, this was a significant thing to them. Along comes Jesus and...boom...there’s the solution! Demon gone. End of problem. And they were just stunned with that. Suddenly Jesus identified Himself as the One who could solve their problems; as the One who could remove the demonic spirits; the One who could deal with the issues in their lives. It says that the word about Jesus spread *immediately*. Everywhere people were going to flock to Jesus, trying to figure out who He was.

Because I doubt the goodness of God and because I convince myself I can be my own god and run my own life, I tend to trust myself to deal with the problems and the issues and the difficulties of life. But I realize quickly that I'm powerless; I'm overwhelmed; I don't have what it takes to deal with this stuff. And along comes Jesus and I realize, *You know, I've got to repent; I've got to change my thinking. Rather than trusting myself, I've got to learn to trust Him. He has the power to deal with whatever I'm facing in life.* But that's a whole new way of thinking.

How were people supposed to respond to the message of Jesus? They were supposed to repent and believe. What does that mean? It means that they were supposed to believe in this new calling. Rather than living for themselves and their own purpose and their own agenda, they were supposed to live for Jesus and His agenda and His will and His purpose. Rather than seeing themselves as the source of truth—that they could decide for themselves what's right and wrong and true and untrue—they had to change their thinking and realize that Jesus is the source of truth.

Jesus defines what's true and what's not, and I obey that and I believe that. I have to recognize that rather than me being the god of my own life and trying to solve all my own problems and run my own show, I repent of that and surrender to Jesus, understanding it's His power in my life that addresses the issues in my life.

You say, "Boy, that really sounds hard." No, it doesn't—it sounds like good news! This isn't the bad news of the gospel. This is the *good* news of the gospel. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus is asking you to live for that which matters. Instead of spending your life just catching fish and surviving, how about being a part of something that will change eternity?

You say, "What does that really mean for me?" For some of you, probably a handful of you, it actually means you're going to need to drop what you're doing and fulfill the calling that God has called you to. For most of us, it's just understanding that what we do every day has a different purpose. Rather than just going through every day and doing my work and trying to be a good person and paying the bills and hoping that all works out, I understand that there's a kingdom purpose to everything I do. I need to understand that God can use whatever I'm doing to influence others for Christ. There's a greater purpose.

If God has called you to be a businessman or woman, you need to understand there's more to that than just being successful and paying the bills, but that is the avenue through which you can influence people for Christ. Every day is a kingdom day. If God has called you to be a schoolteacher or a coach or a student or an artist or a homemaker—whatever God has called you to—understand God hasn't just called you to crank it out and pay the bills, but He has called you to be a kingdom builder. And every day is an opportunity to build the kingdom. Every day is an opportunity to influence somebody for Christ. It's to live for His purpose and to understand that's ultimately what really matters—to say, "Yes, it's for this purpose I will live." That's not bad news; that's good news!

Jesus is calling you, instead of wasting your life, to invest it in that which matters. Jesus is calling you to understand that we don't have to grope in the darkness. We don't have to try and figure out what's true and what's not true. But He has given us the source of authority. He has given us His truth. And by following it we will experience the life that He desires us to experience.

That's not bad news. That's good news. But it is a change of thinking. We have to change our thinking in terms of the source of truth. We have to understand that Jesus calls us not to be our own gods and not to trust in ourselves, but to trust in Him and His power in our lives and surrender to Him as the King and let His power address the issues in our lives. That's not bad news. That's good news. That's the life-changing good news of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, that's the *good news about Jesus according to Mark*.

Our Father, we're thankful that Your message is not bad news. It's good news. But Lord, it is radically different than how we think naturally. So we have to change our minds. Lord, help us to understand that You've called us to be a part of something which is eternal, something which lasts forever. Rather than living for ourselves and our own agenda, You've called us to be a part of that which lasts forever.

Lord, You've given us Your Word as the source of truth. Help us to understand the truth is not found in our own minds and our own opinions, or even in the opinions of others, but it's found in the authority of the Scriptures. Lord, help us to change our minds and believe that You are the source of authority, and to live that way. Lord, help us to understand that that's good news—that we need not grope in the darkness, but we have the light of the Word that lights our path.

And then, Lord, help us to understand that we cannot be our own gods. We cannot trust ourselves to solve the issues and problems in our lives. But Lord, we need the power of Jesus within us. So Lord, help us to change our minds and trust You instead of ourselves. Lord, help us to understand that that's good news, because it is life-changing. Lord, help us to truly understand the good news of the gospel, that we would understand what it means to be a Christ-follower. In Jesus' name, Amen.

¹ www.barna.org Dec. 1, 2003 Update: *A Biblical Worldview Has a Radical Effect on a Person's Life*

*Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
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Study Questions

The Good News About Jesus According to Mark

Repent and Believe

Mark 1:14-28

Opening Discussion

1. A 2002 ABC poll indicates 83% of Americans consider themselves Christian. Yet a recent Barna poll would indicate only 4% have a biblical worldview. Barna defined a biblical worldview as follows:
 - (1) belief that absolute moral truth exists;
 - (2) belief that such truth is defined by the Bible; and
 - (3) firm belief (a) that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life; (b) God is the all-powerful, all-knowing Creator of the universe; (c) salvation is a gift of God that cannot be earned; (d) Satan is real; (e) Christians have a responsibility to share their faith with others; and (f) the Bible is accurate in all of its teaching.*

Why do you believe there is such a gap between those who call themselves Christians and those who actually hold to biblical doctrine?

2. Satan's lies to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 were:
 - God is not as good as you think He is.
 - You can be your own god, determining for yourselves good and evil.
 - There are no real consequences to disobedience.

What evidence do you see that people are still believing those same lies today? What are the consequences of believing those lies?

Bible Study

1. Who is Jesus according to Mark 1:1-13?
2. Read Mark 1:14-28. According to Mark, Jesus' message was the gospel of God, meaning the "good news" of God. Do people today consider the preaching of the gospel good news? Why or why not?

When we think of total commitment to being a follower of Jesus, do we tend to think of what we will have to give up or what we will gain? Why is that?

3. Jesus announced that the "kingdom of God is at hand." If Jesus announced His kingdom and Himself as the King, what does that imply about how *we* should respond? Is the kingdom of God a democracy or monarchy? What are the implications for us?
4. How should people respond to Jesus according to Mark 1:15? What do people need to repent from and what do people need to believe?

5. The good news of Jesus is that He is calling you to follow Him and He will make you become a fisher of men. Why is this calling “good news”? What does it mean for you to become a fisher of men?
6. The people were amazed at Jesus’ teaching because He taught as one with authority. Why is it so important that our source of authority for truth is the Bible? Is there absolute truth? Why or why not?
7. Did the demons question the authority of Jesus?

Compare James 2:19. Jesus didn’t just claim to have authority; He demonstrated His authority over the powers of darkness.

Application

1. Mark presents three specific areas in which we need to repent and believe:
 - (1) to believe that His purpose is what ultimately matters;
 - (2) to believe that His truth is absolute truth;
 - (3) to believe that His power is absolute power over any issue in our lives.

In light of this, complete the following sentences:

“Because I believe His purpose is what ultimately matters I will...”

“Because I believe His truth is absolute truth I will...”

“Because I believe His power is absolute power over any issue in my life I will...”

2. Why is the message of 1:14-28 “good news”?
3. Pray that God will open your eyes to His calling, His truth and His power.

* www.barna.org Dec. 1, 2003 Update: *A Biblical Worldview Has a Radical Effect on a Person’s Life*