

DEFIANCE: CHALLENGE THE NORM

Mark Daily Readings, WEEK ONE

As you begin each day:

- (1) **Find a quiet place** where you can be alone. This is important for you to more easily focus as you read and have an awareness of God's presence. Prepare yourself to listen.
- (2) **Read the verses and highlight the main points** that stand out to you. Keep a journal of important things you learn and pray about in this process. Whether you have read the verses before or not, approach them with an eagerness to learn something new about the life and character of Jesus.
- (3) **Ponder the question(s)**. Maybe our question works for you, or maybe you have something else based on the reading that you need to continue to process. Whatever it is, be intentional about thinking and praying about it throughout your day.

DAY ONE

MARK 1:1-15

John the Baptist was baptizing and preaching repentance. His message caused a great excitement and following, but he made sure that people knew someone even greater and more powerful was coming. Why is it important that this famous baptizer (John) baptized Jesus (v 9-11)? What does it mean to you that Jesus was baptized, tempted (v 12-13) and then began his ministry sharing the good news of God (v 14-15)? How can you identify with the fact that Jesus was tempted in the midst of being obedient?

DAY TWO

MARK 1:16-28

When Jesus called these men (v 16-20), what did their response look like? (Think about HOW they responded, WHAT they left behind, WHAT they may have been thinking/feeling...) How has Jesus called you? What has your response looked like? What can you learn from the response of the early disciples?

Jesus "taught them as one who had authority" (v 22). According to this passage, what does the authority of Jesus look like and how did it ignite his fame? How do you view the authority of Jesus and how are you spreading His fame?

DAY THREE

MARK 1:29-45

What stands out most to you about Jesus' character in these verses (his humility, his healing, his need for prayer, his view of people)? Maybe there are some specific words or phrases that stand out most to you? Which of those things would strengthen YOUR character? How could you potentially grow in those areas?

DAY FOUR

MARK 2:1-17

The paralytic and his friends were desperate to see Jesus. How did their need for Jesus cause them to act? What does that kind of desperation/need look like today? What does it look like for you?

DAY FIVE

MARK 2:18-28

Jesus was questioned about his DEFIANCE of some "important" rules and traditions... what was Jesus ultimately saying about them through his actions and response? How does Jesus' view of rules and tradition encourage or challenge you as you look at why you do the things you do?

DEFIANCE: CHALLENGE THE NORM

Mark Daily Readings, WEEK TWO

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DAY ONE

MARK 3:1-21

Stubborn hearts hinder our ability to truly see and serve Jesus. We can easily become bound by human-made rules that can prevent us from doing what is best and fostering life in others (v. 1-6). Pure, seeking and humble hearts pursue Jesus, pushing through crowds just to touch him (v. 7-12). And ordinary men are who Jesus chose to be in his closest, most intimate group. He appointed and gave authority to simple, regular guys (v. 13-21). So where do you fit? Which group of people do you relate to best? What do these verses tell you about Jesus' ministry, leadership and how Jesus is calling and equipping you?

DAY TWO

MARK 3:22-35

The teachers of the law accused Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebub (another name for Satan). What was Jesus' response to the accusation (v. 23-30)? Why do you think he chose to speak in parables and not more simply, like, "No, I'm not Beelzebub, I'm Jesus"? How might you have responded differently if people were making a similar assumption about you? What does this passage show you about Jesus' character?

After this confrontation, Mark talks about a visit from Jesus' mother and brothers (v. 31-34). Jesus responds in an odd way after being told of their presence. What does Jesus' response tell you about how he regards those who believe in and follow the will of God? What does it tell you about his regard for you? How does that encourage you, or what questions does it raise for you?

DAY THREE

MARK 4:1-20

Jesus shared a parable about seed and then went into a little more detail while alone with the disciples. Initially, what do you understand about the seed (v. 3-8)? What do you think Jesus meant by "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you" and those on the outside won't understand (v. 11-12)? Using Jesus' explanation, how would you compare yourself to the seed (v. 13-20)?

DAY FOUR

MARK 4:21-34

Here Jesus mentions how silly it would be for one to hide a lamp under a bowl. It would be the same as us turning on a lamp and then covering it with a blanket. What use is the lamp or its light when it is covered? What is blocking your light? What are you concealing that needs to be revealed? Maybe a struggle that needs accountability, a story that needs to be shared, a gift or service that needs to be given? How does the parable about the lamp (v. 21-25) compare to the parables of the seed (v. 26-34)?

DEFIANCE: CHALLENGE THE NORM

Mark Daily Readings, WEEK TWO, continued

DAY FIVE

MARK 4:35-41

The interesting part of this story is that the disciples were exactly where Jesus told them and wanted them to be... and yet a storm came... a storm with waves big enough to overcome the boat and put fear in the disciples (many who were experienced fishermen). What was frustrating to the disciples about Jesus continuing to sleep through the storm? What would you have been feeling if you were one of the disciples? What "storm" have you been through where you questioned God's motives and even his presence? What does this passage tell you about Jesus' power and presence in the midst of storms? What have you learned about God from past experience that has better prepared you for future storms? What can you learn from this passage that may better prepare you for being in the midst of an overwhelming storm?

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DAY ONE

MARK 5:1-20

Jesus again authenticates His ministry through a miracle; this time He shows He has power (and authority) over demons by casting them out of this man. The previously demon-possessed man was so grateful for what Jesus had done for him that he wanted to go with Jesus (v. 18). But look at Jesus' response in verse 19-20. Jesus had a greater goal in mind. He preferred for the man to stay and display God's greatness by witnessing to others. What has been your response to God's work in your life? When have you desired to do one thing (stay where it's comfortable) but Jesus called you to something bigger? What might that look like for you right now? How can you learn from this man's response to Jesus' request (v. 20)?

DAY TWO

MARK 5:21-34

This woman displays remarkable faith. She was *confidant* of Jesus' power. Faith's significance does not come from the person who has it, but rather who/what it is in. Who or what do you put your faith in... yourself? Your job? Someone close to you? Or in God? How is that faith shown in your life? What are you willing to do to get close to Jesus/grow in your faith? What risks are you willing to take? How does your faith show your confidence of Jesus' power?

DAY THREE

MARK 5:35-43

It's interesting the parallels between today's story and the one you read yesterday. The woman had been afflicted for 12 years and had faith to be healed, and now the father of a 12-year-old child had faith she could be healed. Both are powerful examples of faith and Jesus' ministry to the hurting. But let's take a different look... re-read verse 40. If Jesus were here today, what would cause you to laugh? Obviously Jesus said and did some things that could have been called "rediculous". What "rediculous" word would you love to hear from God or see happen? What kind of faith do you have in His ability to say/do it? How have you boxed in Jesus with your idea of who He is and what He can do?

DEFIANCE: CHALLENGE THE NORM

Mark Daily Readings, *WEEK THREE* continued

DAY FOUR

MARK 6:1-13

What do you see as the problem with these people (v. 1-6)? Jesus had returned to his hometown... to people who knew Him, His family and had seen Him grow up. The problem with these people is that they were so familiar with Jesus (or so they thought) that it actually hindered their faith. Sometimes we hear stories of Jesus so often (or simply feel we know everything we need to know about Him) that we become bored... and that boredom hinders our faith. How can you keep the proper view of Jesus today and in the future so that your faith can continue growing? What kind of faith do you see in the disciples that they would follow Jesus' calling to "take nothing", go out in pairs and preach and heal with authority? If those ordinary men could leave everything and follow with faith, what may be holding you back?

DAY FIVE

MARK 6:14-29

How do you think Herod viewed John the Baptist? What is significant about the death of John the Baptist? How/why was Herod swayed into doing something that caused him such distress? What can you learn from Herod? How can you make sure to avoid the same mistake? Why is it important to set up boundaries and prepare for challenging, tempting times in advance? What have you learned from personal experience of times that you neglected to prepare for those times?

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DAY ONE

MARK 6:30-44

What is most impressive to you about this story? Be sure to take time to find something new... resist the temptation to view it as you always have if it's very familiar to you. (Remember how Ron has challenged us not to ignore a statement because you think it isn't significant.) Read one sentence at a time and be intentional about processing what is happening along the way. When you get to a statement that stands out to you, stop to think about it. What image does it give you of the disciples? Of Jesus? How does their example challenge or encourage you?

DAY TWO

MARK 6:45-56

Verse 45 starts with "Immediately..." What does that mean to you? Why did Jesus send the disciples on ahead? What is significant about this? This is the second time we see Jesus put the disciples on a boat headed for a storm (first example was in Mark 4:35-41). What learning experience have you faced over and over? Why do you think the repetition was/is necessary? When he saw them straining, Jesus went out to the disciples but almost passed them by (v. 48). Why do you think He might have passed them? The disciples had just witnessed the feeding of the 5000 and now had seen Jesus walk on water (and again the calming of a storm). Yet, "they had not understood... their hearts were hardened" (v. 52). When have you missed the message of Jesus because your heart was hardened?

DAY THREE

MARK 7:1-13

Here we see another defiance of tradition. Why might the washing have been so important? Why do you think the Pharisees got so upset? What is your response when you see others doing things differently than you have traditionally done/are doing? Re-read verse 7. What does it mean to you? What might you need to re-evaluate or change in order to be sure rules or traditions made by men aren't overshadowing your love and devotion to God? Ask God to show you how you might be worshiping in vain.

DAY FOUR

MARK 7:14-23

Jesus is referring to clean vs. unclean meats and ceremonial washing (like in v. 1-13 from yesterday). He wanted to point out that purity comes from internal cleanness, not external observances. Read Proverbs 4:23. How might this apply to the verses in Mark? What can you or should you be doing to better guard your heart? How might guarding your heart help protect you from worshiping in vain?

DEFIANCE: CHALLENGE THE NORM

Mark Daily Readings, WEEK FOUR, continued

DAY FIVE

MARK 7:24-37

The woman had heard of Jesus and came begging. What image do you have of her? Her character? Her view of Christ? She was specific and intentional in her request to Jesus, asking for a small amount, a “crumb” of His help. Jesus knew her heart and saw her faith; her request was granted. What can you learn from this woman for how to approach God in your prayer life?

After reading about Jesus healing the possessed daughter, we read about Him healing a deaf and mute man. When is a recent time you have seen an amazing thing? For example, the healing of a friend or family member, a birth, safety in a dangerous situation, relational healing... When is the last time something caught your breath and made you sit back in awe? Did you give God the credit? How might He have been at work? How do these two stories of healing encourage your faith? How might they frustrate you (for example, you or someone close to you needs healing that you haven't seen, etc.)? Take some throughout your day to release whatever emotions today's reading brought for you: excitement and awe - thank and praise Him... frustration and mistrust - tell Him, He can handle it... Challenge yourself to be honest. Take a chance on letting go.