

DISCIPLE TRAINING
How To Study The Bible
Part 7
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We're looking at the gospel of Mark as a means of personally helping us study the Bible more effectively on an individual level. We have now traveled through the first five chapters of Mark. I hope they have been enriching and exciting for you. I must say that every time I'm in this gospel again my heart gets so revived and my spirit draws close to the Lord.

Each evening as we've started out we've taken a moment to review and set a context for where we have been so that we in our own way we might do a shorthand work of memorizing this gospel. Thus far we have taken sections 1, chapter 1:1-13, 1:14-1:45, 2:1-3:6, 3:7-3:35, 4:1-34, 4:35 to the end of chapter 5. The first division of paragraphs was Preparation. Following that was Opening Events – Jesus healing, teaching and calling disciples. Then Opposition – for the first time Jesus was drawing blood in his ministry over the issue of did he have authority to forgive sins, did he have the right to challenge practices like the particular method of keeping the Sabbath, did he have a right to break tradition of eating with sinners and tax collectors. Then Counter Opposition. Jesus now charges right back at the opposition and selects disciples and alleges that they're [the Pharisees] are crossing a fine line into blasphemy of the Holy Spirit which is eternal sin. Then chapter 4 there's kind of a calm mood in the first 34 verses as Jesus by the Lake of Galilee and the hills is teaching his disciples and he is teaching them about the Kingdom – Kingdom Parables. Showing that the kingdom is not something external and political but something inward that must be received. Then from 4:35 to the end of chapter 5 a section of four miracles which are the Selected Miracles. A miracle which shows his authority over nature, a miracle which shows his authority over demons, a miracle which shows his authority over illness, a miracle that shows his authority over death.

That brings us to tonight. Chapter 6. Preparation, Opening Events, Opposition, Counter Opposition, Kingdom Parables, Selected Miracles. Chapter 6 is not the longest chapter of the gospel of Mark but it's the longest chapter in the first half. Actually it only has 7 paragraphs. But the paragraphs in the Revised Standard Version are very, very long. Tonight rather than reading this chapter in its entirety as we've done in previous times I think in light of fact that sometimes in Bible study we just need to be flexible and not always do the same thing every time, we'll take a paragraph at a time, poke our way through it and when we get to the end we'll say, What was it all talking about. What was it saying to our heart? How do we title this particular passage?

6:1 "He went away from there and came to his own country. His disciples followed him. On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue. Many who heard him were astonished saying where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary and the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offense at him and Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house.' He could do no mighty work there except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them and he marveled because of their unbelief."

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Obviously what is happening to Jesus here has to do with his own country which was the city of Nazareth. He is being rejected at Nazareth. A title I've given to this paragraph is Nazareth Rejection. That helps me remember it.

By the way, if you go to Nazareth today, one of the interesting things is Nazareth today is divided into lower and upper Nazareth. Upper Nazareth is Jewish. Lower Nazareth is Arab. The official government of the city today interestingly enough is dominated by the communist party. The communist party is legal in the country of Israel. As long as it doesn't advocate political overthrow of the government. A town of about 60,000 people – 35,000 Arabs and about 25,000 Jews. Among the Arab population there is a strong Christian presence.

Jesus found that in his hometown he was not received. Where does this man get all his wisdom? Is not this the carpenter? Which shows us that Jesus had followed in the trade of his step-father Joseph. Also the fact that he is called the son of Mary and no reference is made of Joseph is an indication already that Joseph had passed from the scene. After Jesus' twelfth birthday when he went down to Jerusalem and stunned the teachers of the law in the temple, Joseph drops out of the text that we are to assume that somewhere in Jesus' life between 12 and 30 Joseph passed away. Jesus inherited the trade. Some say that this "Is this not the Son of Mary," reflects the fact that in Jesus' hometown the gossip never died and people remembered that later in her pregnancy the young lady, Mary, escaped with her fiancé down to Bethlehem and the circumstances of the necessity of their flight were probably not blamed on the idea of being born of a virgin. But rather I wouldn't at all be surprised that at Nazareth it was always sort the underlying current and gossip that Jesus had been born illegitimately to Joseph and Mary, that they had not waited until their wedding day. Nazareth would have been no larger than a town of 15,000 people and in a small town stories stay around.

A word on Nazareth. Nazareth was strategically situated in Jesus' day because it occupied the hill country that overlooked the valley of Jezreel, which we call the battle of Armeggedon. If you're sitting on the brow at Nazareth you can look over and see Mt. Carmel. You can look toward Megiddo and see Mt. Tabar where Deborah defeated Barak. All the history of the land is before you. You can imagine Jesus sitting on the brow of that hill and remembering the history of his people as the armies of Egypt came through the valley of Jezreel as the Babylonians and Assyrians came through that valley as great battles occurred right below Nazareth. Yet being a town in a strategic position it was a little bit off road so that it was a protected space for him. A nurturing place for him to go.

It's obvious from the text of our gospels that Jesus, when he was a boy and a young man at Nazareth did not teach nor did he do miracles. They are saying of him, Where did this man get all this wisdom and these works? Implying that they had not seen this up to this time. That was a stunner for them.

Therefore indeed as the gospels indicate to us his public ministry had begun first at Cana in Galilee where he did his first miracle and then his preaching ministry had begun at Capernaum as Mark indicates.

We see in the text also that Jesus not only had a mother but that he had brothers and sisters. Some say, Wasn't Mary a perpetual virgin? The New Testament text doesn't support that view. Jesus had four brothers that are named. James, Joseph, Judas and Simon. And he has sisters

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who are not named. But the fact that “sisters” is in the plural indicated that he had at least two. So in addition to Jesus who was the child of Mary by the supernatural conception of the Holy Spirit, there were at least 6 other children – 4 boys and at least 2 girls that were born to Mary and Joseph. Couldn’t these brothers be cousins or children of Joseph by an earlier marriage? A remote possibility. The Greek word that is used is the same word used for blood brothers throughout the New Testament. For example Peter and Andrew. James and John are blood brothers. Here the word brothers occurs in the text again. So the common word for straight out blood brothers. He had a family. He grew up in a normal nurturing environment.

By way of spiritual application of this text, I would say that we must be careful that we do not at any point in our experience lock Jesus in a box of our prior expectations. If there’s anything I learned from this Nazareth rejection is that when Jesus began to present to them new evidences of himself and who he was they were unwilling to receive them because they already had a caricature of what he was. He is the carpenter. He is the Son of Mary. He has brothers and sisters. The idea that he has wisdom and works somehow had dawned on them and they were not willing to admit into their life new evidence. One of the fundamental reasons why Jesus is not received and believed by people in the world today is that he has been rejected on the basis of premature and incorrect conclusions that have been drawn about him. That people have not allowed themselves to get into the New Testament or receive the evidence which he is presenting of himself.

I’ve wondered of young people who have grown up in Christian homes who have received a picture of Jesus and who have walked away from Jesus Christ before they really understood who he really was. They rejected him on the basis of a premature conclusion. As I heard who Jesus really was I was willing to lay aside this caricature and embrace him. I supposed there are moments in each of our lives where we get in our service to the Lord, we need to get a fresh vision of who he is and have an adequate view of him that meets our present situation. At Nazareth, Jesus was simply rejected on the basis of caricature. He was presenting new evidences and only a few had faith. For the few who had faith they saw him really do marvelous works.

Nazareth rejection is followed by a paragraph that is the shortest in the gospel of Mark that takes up half a verse in the Revised Standard Text. I don’t know how it lays in the NIV.

“He went about the villages teaching,” that’s the length of the paragraph. I simply call this Village Teaching. It is another illustration in Jesus’ life and ministry of his traveling. He was unlike John the Baptist who stayed in one place.

Then we get to the third paragraph that begins in verse 7. “He called to him the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff. [If you read Matthew 10 you think, Wasn’t there a conflict here? Because Matthew 10 says he charged them to not acquire a staff. Mark is saying he told them to take nothing for the journey except a staff. Is that a contradiction? No, if you read the verb closely. Jesus in Matthew is quoted as don’t acquire a staff, which means go out and get a new one. If you have a normal walking stick take it but don’t go out and get something special.] Take no bread, no bag, no money in your belt. But wear sandals. Don’t put on two suits. When you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not receive you and they refuse to hear you when you leave shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them.’ So they went out and preached that men should repent and they cast

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out many demons and anointed with oil [first time we've come across that] many that were sick and healed them.”

This is the first training mission. Some have taken the scriptures and said, Here's the way all missionary endeavor ought to take place. You simply go out on faith and the Lord will provide. Don't take anything with you. How come we're raising support and having a budget and all that sort of thing and yet we read here not to take anything with you?

The reason is that in this particular text this is a short limited mission. It is to people that are of their own ethnicity and living in their own locality. People who spoke the language they spoke and it was from Jesus' point of view the first chance for them to go out and begin to build their faith and learn to depend upon him in a far more adequate way in their life.

The disciples of Jesus were not enrolled in a college or Bible school where they would set in class for semesters at a time and finally after four years of education go out and become involved in some practical phase of ministry. Their education consisted of listening to him and then immediately going out and applying it in some way. So they're going out in application. We all know the best way to learn is to go do it. If you're going to learn to drive a car don't confine yourself to reading books on how to drive a car. Drive one!

Sometimes we wait in our Christian service. “How can I be a Sunday school teacher? How can I be a witness? I don't know enough. I haven't read enough books yet. I haven't taken a course yet.” Take the courses and read the books but don't let that be a substitute for actually going out and doing it. You'll learn far more by doing it than by sitting around waiting to learn more about it.

So Jesus sends them out. But he knows that they're just beginning so he slaps them with some limitations. Matthew's gospel tells us the limits their geography. He says to them, “Don't go to the gentiles or to the Samaritans.” Mark leaves that detail out probably because he's writing Romans and it would take him paragraphs to explain what Jesus meant so he just leaves it out. That's a good way to do if you're going to say something that will confuse people because from their particular cultural context they don't apprehend or understand it why raise the confusion. So Mark doesn't report it. But Matthew says it. Matthew's writing to Jews who would understand what Jesus is saying. Don't go to gentiles or the Samaritans. Why? Because the Lord's racially prejudiced? No. Not at all. It's because these disciples are prejudiced. They go out and they're still calling gentiles “dogs.” How could they go minister to Gentiles? We know two of them still have this desire to torch Samaritan villages. Jesus goes to a place of the Samaritans and they won't receive him so they disciples come to Jesus and say, “Could you burn them down, Lord?” That's a wonderful type of evangelism called Scorched Earth Evangelism! They were unable to handle cultural and ethnic diversity. So Jesus just slaps a barrier on the geography and says don't go to anybody but the lost sheep of the house of Israel, which is his way of saying, “Start where you're at.” Start with people who are close to you culturally, who speak your language, they're your age. Be there. That's what Jesus does. It's good training methodology is it. He doesn't send us out to do something that's impossible.

He slaps also a limitation on their baggage. Don't take things with you. Don't take a bread box. Don't take a wallet. Just go out. Why does he do that? Because they must learn to be living on faith and they must also do that most difficult thing for people who go vocationally full time in

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the Lord's service. They must learn to receive from other people. I always have wished I was independently wealthy so that I could serve this church without taking anything from anybody to make a living. It galls me no end that I have no vocational training for any useful task. Except the ministry.

Go out, Jesus says. He does a very neat thing here. The Lord is concerned for details. I love his concern for this detail. He says when you go into a place and if the house receives you stay there until you leave that place. Why do you suppose he gave a direction like that? Cause he knew people and he knew his disciples and he knows when they go into a town somebody says – they went out two by two. That's so they could be encouraged. If you have two people if one of you gets down the other can pick you up. Or if one of you gets proud the other can bring you low. It's a wonderful balance – two walking together. The Christian life was never meant to be a life we're called to live it alone. We're always meant to live it in association with other people.

Why was it a good word? James and John were kind of social climbers. They were sons of thunder, upwardly mobile bound. They would go into a village and somebody with a utility apartment who said to them, "You can have the living room because that's where the bed is and I'll sleep in the closet tonight. I don't have a whole lot to offer but I'm so glad you brought me the good news about Jesus." They say thank you. Then two days later, someone has been healed, maybe, under their ministry. A dramatic healing and it happens that the person who is healed is the daughter of the town's wealthiest man who has a 24 room Roman villa... "James and John, would you like to come stay at my house tonight?" They come back to the one room apartment person and say, "I know it's an inconvenience for me to stay here. I'm putting you out." So off they go.

What's that person going to feel like? What's going to be the integrity and credibility of the gospel if you do that to people? Jesus said the first place you land you stay there until you leave. Or they're going to think you're in it for the money. Or for the luxurious accommodations.

"But if they don't receive you," Jesus says... this is the third limitation. He limited their geography, he limited their baggage, and then he limited their language. He said, "If they don't receive you, shake the dust off your feet." I submit to you that that is a far different missionary methodology than we find in the book of Acts when the apostle Paul was a missionary. There's a word in Acts used of the Apostle Paul that crops up again and again. That is the word "disputed." He disputed with them. It means in the Greek a logical argumentation. Paul didn't just go testify and share with people of his personal experience although he did that. He argued logically from the scripture or from history the case for Jesus Christ and who he was. He entered into dialogue with people – question and answer. Dynamic kind of preaching. If they rejected him he just kept at it.

Why are they here shaking the dust of their feet when later in missionary work they'll be presenting an apologetic, a logical presentation from the gospel? I think it's a very simple reason. They didn't know enough to argue with anybody. They really didn't.

Jesus is training them. Don't wait until you know everything, until you can intellectually argue with somebody. Just share what's happening in your life. If the person doesn't receive it, they're not ready for your testimony, move on. Don't let it crush you.

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Jesus is saying don't get put off and don't get discouraged about witnessing if somebody doesn't receive your testimony. Shake the dust off your feet and move on. Somebody else is going to believe. Keep going. He knows that his disciples are going to learn more as they follow him and they'll be able to handle things on more sophisticated levels as they come.

The great thing is while they step out on faith God does things. You never grow in faith unless you get out on the edge. The disciples as far as we know never healed anybody until Jesus said, I'm not going to go with you this trip. I'm sending you as an advance team out to Galilee. You're going to get everybody talking about me. Go out and heal the sick. As you step out to do the Lord's work you grow in faith. But if you stand around all day waiting for something to do faith never grows. Faith only grows when you get out on the cutting edge of risk and do something the Lord's telling you to do but it looks humanly can't be done.

The next paragraph is a long paragraph. "King Herod heard of it." That's Herod of Galilee, not Herod the Great that killed the babies of Bethlehem. This is a different Herod. "King Herod heard of it for Jesus' name had become known. Some said John the Baptizer has been raised from the dead. That is why these powers are at work in him. Others said it's Elijah. And others said it is a prophet like one of the prophets of old." It's interesting how people even then had a touch of reincarnation in their beliefs. "When Herod heard of it he said, John whom I beheaded has been raised. [His conscious bothered him.]" And then there's a flashback to a moment probably a couple years earlier "For Herod had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias his brother Phillip's wife [Herod had two brothers named Phillip.] because he had married her. John said to Herod, It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to kill him. But she could not for Herod feared John knowing that he was a righteous and holy man and kept him safe. When he heard him he was much perplexed yet he heard him gladly. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and the leading men of Galilee. When Herodias' daughter came in she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, Ask me whatever you wish and I will grant it. He vowed to her. Whatever you ask me I will give you even half of the kingdom. And she went out and said to her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, the head of John the Baptizer. She came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, I want you to give at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter. The king was exceedingly sorry but because of his oath and his guests he did not want to break his word to her and immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard and gave orders to bring his head. He went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard of it they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb."

Isn't that a distressing story? That's one of those stories in life that keeps me away from the positive confession boys. Positive confession can't explain this. John the Baptist had an abiding and deep faith in God. A faith so deep that he had the guts to say right was right and wrong was wrong. For his efforts off comes his head, served on a platter at a drunken stag party.

And you want to say, if you're human, where is God in this process? And why doesn't God stop all this charade? God could have stopped it but he didn't because there are those unexplainable things in life. Some things God has not in his own sovereign will determined to either reveal to us or explain or to make up until we stand in that day whole in his presence.

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This paragraph is John Beheaded. A dark moment. That moment that it had occurred a couple years before or maybe just a year before has now come back to haunt Herod because he hears about all these wonderful things that are taking place. The twelve have gone out, fanned out through Galilee and got everybody excited. Herod's conscious is working overtime on him. "It's John!" he says.

Notice how loyal John's disciples are. What a contrast between John's disciples and Jesus' disciples. Think ahead for a moment to Jesus' own crucifixion. Did his disciples come and take his body and lay it in a tomb? No. They all split. So this is Mark's little way of giving a back handed compliment to John's disciples and a put down to them. Here John's disciples at least had the courage to come and get his body. Jesus' disciples fled and left it up to a wealthy man in Jerusalem to bury and left it up to the women to come to the tomb.

Nazareth rejection, Village Teaching, Twelve Sent, John Beheaded. It's a dangerous time.

Verse 30 "The apostles return to Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. He said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest awhile.'" That's good advice. They'd been busy out there and it was now getting psychologically and physically dangerous. Herod had killed John. Who says he wouldn't come get them? So Jesus has started hanging around the lake more and more.

He gets in a little boat and gets out of there. "For many were coming and going and they had no leisure even to eat and they went away to a boat in a lonely place by themselves. Now many saw them going and knew them and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. [That's one of the great things when you're in Galilee. You can see all over the place. When the boat's going, you run around the shore.] On the shore he saw a great throng and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd and he had to teach them many things. When it grew late his disciples came to him and said 'This is a lonely place and the hour is now late. [You've messed up our day off, Lord. This was supposed to be vacation time. Remember? We're going on a retreat?]' Send them away to go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat.' He answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' They said to him, 'Shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?' He said to them, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' When they had found out they said, 'Five and two fish. [Andrew had fund the kid with the five and two] But he commanded them all to set down by companies upon the green grass. [Note the detail: the grass was green. This becomes important when we compare it to a later feeding. It shows that it was the spring of the year. Grass is not green in the summer and fall in Galilee. That means it was one year before Jesus' Passion when this happened. One year before the Passion.] So they sat down in groups. By hundreds and fifties. [Jesus was an organizer. He didn't just let the group plunk all over everywhere. They're going to be seated. They're going to deal with crowds and groups. He taught in an organized way and he organized people.] Taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven [a typical Jewish blessing. You always bless God before you eat food and drink water.] He looked up to him and blessed the loaves and gave it to the disciples to set before them. And he divided the two fish among them all and they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of fish and loaves and those who ate the loaves were five thousand men." Matthew says not including women and children.

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This paragraph is Five Thousand Fed. It's one of the two feeding miracles in the gospels. It's a nature miracle. Jesus who had refused to turn stones into bread now is turning bread and fish in a multiplying process. I wonder as he was doing it if many in the crowd were even aware of what was happening. The food was just naturally growing as he went along. It was the disciples that became aware of the little bit they started out with.

Barclay and others say this was not a real miracle. It was simply that when the little boy shared his five loaves and two fishes everybody in the crowd pulled out the lunch that they'd been hiding away from everybody else, got it out and they all shared together. It was a wonderful thing that turned everybody's generosity loose.

The gospels don't play it that way. In fact this is the only miracle of the 35 miracles that Jesus did, the only miracle that is found in all four gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We know from John's gospel it was the turning point of his miracle. Because after this miracle he teaches about his body being bread that is broken and no longer do the crowds follow him the extent that they had before. The Feeding of the 5000 and the disciples are at work as waiters. Lord, we've just been healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead and you've got us waiting on people? You've got us serving bread and fish Lord? It's not fair. People with Rev in front of their name and Dr in front of their name don't clean toilet bowls. They don't do things like pick up pieces of paper or polish windows. That's for people who don't have those titles. Jesus has got them out as matri d' and waiters in the crowd. It's a wonderful thing.

I can see the kids. You know there were kids in that crowd. It always amazes me how Jesus taught with all those kids present and running around. I see kids there. They're tired. It's late in the day. They're exhausted. They're passing this stuff around and the little kids are stick out their feet and tripping them as they go along. You know how little kids are. It's got to be an exasperating time. I have a message I've preached "How to be a Failure" based on the feeding of the five thousand. One, look at the size of the task. Five thousand men plus women and children. Two, look at the little bit that you have – five loaves and two fishes. Put those two things together. The bigness of the task God calls you to, the little bit that you have. Put those two together and add a third step: leave the Lord out of the picture. You'll fail every time!

But the Lord is in the picture. He multiplies the loaves and fishes and they gather up 12 basketsfull. One for each of them so they'll have enough for the next day. Jesus was a true environmentalist.

"Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat [made them! They didn't want to. They remembered what it was like out on the water at night. No wonder he had to make them get into the boat. Jesus has a marvelous way if you don't learn the lesson the first time he's going to let you do it again! So in Mark 4:35 they've been out in the storm and they haven't learned the lesson too well Jesus has said, We're going to the other side, and they got all fearful in the middle of the storm and he rebuked them. He's saying they never really did learn that lesson. Have you ever had that happen in your life? You've been through something once and the Lord let's you go through it again. No wonder he *made them* get into the boat. He's not even going to go with them this time. They're not going to wake him up!] go before him to the other side to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd. After he had taken leave of them he went up on the mountain to pray [he was going to be safe]. When evening came the wind was out on the sea and he was alone on the land and he saw that they were making headway painfully for the wind

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was against them. About the fourth watch of the night [between 3 and 6 in the morning. He sent them out about sunset. They could have easily gotten across Lake Galilee in an hour in calm weather. In the spring, it gets dark about 8:00 at night, so at 3:00 in the morning you're seven hours they've been out rowing against the wind not making much headway. Just see the scenario here. They've been out on this training mission in Galilee – two by two, sleeping in different beds every night. That'll make you tired just to begin with. Crowds around you all the time teaching and preaching – that'll make you tired. So they're tired. They get to Jesus "I know you're tired. Let's go aside by ourselves and rest." So they go for a rest and 5000 plus women and children show up – a crowd of about 15,000 chase after them. They've got to serve as maitriffs and waiters all day. Then when they're just exhausted and they want to bed down for the night Jesus says, Get in the boat. They get in the boat and they row like crazy for 7 hours and they're not going anywhere. Why is it that our worst trials always occur when we're dead tired? The worst times I have in life are when I'm so exhausted I just can't face it and there it is! They're in no shape to handle this, no shape whatever.]

About the fourth watch of the night he came to them walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them. [that is the strangest phrase in the gospel. What does that mean? That's probably what they thought but I think he was going to get in the boat. "When they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost and cried out for they all were terrified." That rings authentic, doesn't it. That's exactly the reaction you'd expect to be present. If you were in the middle of the night and saw somebody walking across the water when you were fighting for your life I think you would be terrified. A lot of people take this as New Testament mythology. A fiction story. But the psychological things are too real in it. "But immediately he spoke to them and said 'Take heart, it's I. Have no fear.' He got in the boat with them and the wind ceased and they were utterly astounded for they did not understand about the loaves for their hearts were hardened."

Two things could perhaps be said here. In addition to the fact that Jesus repeats lessons and that sometimes our trials occur when we're the tiredest and not ready to handle them. Another thing that could be said, do you notice what's missing here? By the way, his paragraph is Sea Walk. You notice what's missing here? What does Mark omit? Peter. Peter's getting out on the water walking. Why does he omit it? Because Mark always does this. Whenever Peter looks good, it's not there. At Caesaria Philippi for example. Peter says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matthew's gospel says, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Johna. Upon this rock I will build my church..." You won't find it in Mark. Wherever Peter looks bad Mark dwells on that. The denial. The rooster crowing. All that. Mark just goes into reams and reams of detail on that. What's going on? As the early church fathers said, behind the gospel of Mark is the influence of Peter. Peter was the mentor of Mark. Mark wrote down simply what Peter preached. Therefore this gospel is a compilation of a sample of Peter's preaching.

I can buy that because Peter was a man of action. This gospel is a gospel of action. Notice how many times the word "immediately" has occurred. Forty-one times in 16 chapters. Next thing. Action. Always something going on. That's Peter. So Peter when he preaches doesn't make himself look good. He talks about his weaknesses rather than his strengths. I think that's commendable. A good measure of humility for somebody who asked for the chief place in the kingdom at one time and argued about who was greatest. Some lessons do get through. Thank God they do get through. If we live long enough we'll get changed enough. That's encouraging.

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Then there's this other thing that comes out of this story. "For they did not understand about the loaves for their hearts were hardened." What a mystical text. What does that have to do with the water? Someone has said it's got everything to do with it because in the middle of the storm they forgot they were sitting on the baskets full of their last miracle. They had taken twelve baskets full of leftover fish and bread and taken in the boat with them for the next day's lunch. In the middle of the storm they forgot all about the loaves and fishes and how God meets us and provides for us and all that. They forgot. They have the problem we do. I do, anyway. The Lord works in one area of our life. A few weeks later we're facing a situation. It may be parallel. It may be totally different. But what happens? Panic sets in. We forgot what the Lord has done in the past. Because we're just so sure that *this time* we're facing a situation that we won't emerge out of. So he reminds them of the loaves. Their hearts were hardened. They failed to take in the fact that he was the one who worked in unusual way has to preserve and protect and feed his people.

And they thought they were going to go down in that lake. Not one of the twelve died in the bottom of the Lake of Galilee. And we're probably not going to die of the things we fear either. We're going to die of something else. Like getting crucified upside down or something exciting like that!

Last paragraph. We've got Nazareth Rejection, Village Teaching, 12 Sent, John Beheaded, 5000 Fed, Sea Storm. The last paragraph – Bethsaida Healing. "When they had crossed over they came to land at Bethsaida and moored to the shore. "When they crossed over they came to land at Bethsaida and moored to the shore. When they got out of the boat immediately the people recognized him and ran about the whole neighborhood and began to bring sick people on their pallets to any place they heard that he was." Wherever he came – villages, cities, or the country they laid the sick in the marketplaces and besought him that they may touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well."

One of the things Mark does for us as we follow along is show us that in the beginning of Jesus' ministry his miracles happened out of his sovereignty. They happened spontaneously. They at times didn't seem to even be attached to faith on the part of the recipient. But as his ministry grows his miracles become increasingly dependent and he allows them to become dependant upon people's faith. Which is a way of saying and I have to say this to myself as one who has plead for balance – we ought to believe both in healing and ought to believe in perseverance. We don't always know where those two meet. But here will never be healings – physical, emotion, or spiritual – unless faith is really present. In order for faith to be present we need to be in an environment where we see and are encouraged by what the Lord is doing and how he's at work.

Why are they touching the fringe of his garment? The little lady that broke through to him in a crowd and touched the fringe of his garment and the story got around – "That's what works!" So that became the point of contact. "That's the secret of healing. Use the method." It's not the method, friends. It's the faith that goes with it. Jesus allowed the point of contact because he saw the genuine faith of people.

Jesus knows as he comes striding into our life that without faith we cannot function either. We must have faith in our life and as we have faith and do not become resigned to things the way

DISCIPLE TRAINING

How To Study The Bible – Part 7

they are – whatever circumstance we’re facing – do not become resigned to them but continue to press through to the Lord there will be a resolution. If the resolution is not in our outer circumstances they will be in us. But keep pressing.

So we have these seven paragraphs. The common theme that unites them... one word can describe what unites them. That is the word “disciples.” Jesus all through this section is with his disciples. He’s carving out major time now to be with the twelve. As Jesus’ ministry built you will see him more you see him spending with the few. The more time he was spending with the twelve. Because Jesus sought that intimacy and personal training with them.

It reminds me in my life that when we come to Jesus we’re not some face lost in the crowd. That Jesus individualizes and wants to take time to focus on our lives. One of the beautiful things we can do as we study the Bible is we can spend time with one another. I want us to do that as we close our time of worship this evening. Focus on spending some time with one another – praying for one another, encouraging one another and letting the Lord speak to us in moments of being gathered in his name.

Find two or three people to have a moment of prayer with. Join hands. Form a circle and join hands. If one of you in the circle has a need, share that need and let there be prayers of faith for the Lord to work and do his splendid acts in your life tonight.