

engage

Who is Jesus? Does prayer really work? Why does God allow suffering in the world? Is it OK to date non-Christians? What is a Leviathan? What does church actually do? What does true wisdom look like? What's another word for thesaurus? We'll tackle most of these questions in engage 17.

* **DAILY READINGS** Each day's page throws you into the Bible, to get you handling, questioning and exploring God's message to you — encouraging you to act on it and talk to God more in prayer.

THIS ISSUE: Meet the real Jesus in **Mark**; ask big questions with **Job**; fight for true freedom with **Galatians**; get wise reading **Proverbs**; and uncover God's message in **Malachi**.

* **TAKE IT FURTHER** If you're hungry for more at the end of an **engage** page, turn to the **Take it further** section to dig deeper.

* **TRICKY** tackles those mind-bendingly tricky questions that confuse us all, as well as questions our friends bombard us with. This time we ask: **Does prayer really work?**

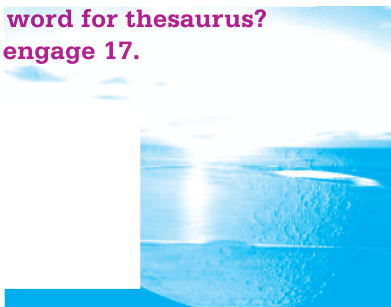
* **STUFF** Articles on stuff relevant to the lives of young Christians. This issue we focus on **relationships**.

* **REAL LIVES** True stories, revealing God at work in people's lives. This time — **the life and death of a missionary**.

* **TOOLBOX** is full of tools to help you understand the Bible. This issue we look at the **timeline of the Bible**.

* **ESSENTIAL** Articles on the basics we really need to know about God, the Bible and Christianity. This issue, we find out exactly what **church** does.

All of us who work on engage are passionate to see the Bible at work in people's lives. Do you want God's word to have an impact on your life? Then open your Bible, and start on the first engage study right now...



HOW TO USE **engage**

- 1 Set a time you can read the Bible every day
- 2 Find a place where you can be quiet and think
- 3 Grab your Bible, pen and a notebook
- 4 Ask God to help you understand what you read
- 5 Read the day's verses with **engage**, taking time to think about it
- 6 Pray about what you've read

BIBLE STUFF

We use the NIV Bible version, so you might find it's the best one to use with **engage**. If the notes say "**Read Mark 1 v 1-8**", look up Mark in the contents page at the front of your Bible. It'll tell you which page Mark starts on. Find chapter 1 of Mark, and then verse 1 of chapter 1 (the verse numbers are the tiny ones). Then start reading. Simple.

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Mark

Guess who

Have you ever played the game Guess Who? You know the one — “Does yours have a moustache?”

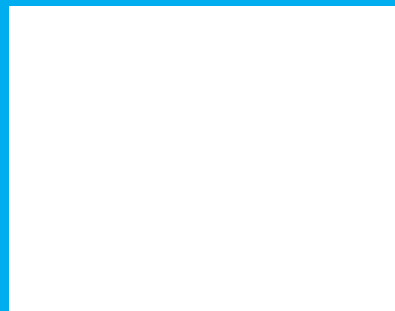
“Nope, is yours wearing a hat?”

As you narrow down the options, you finally work out who is on the other person’s card.

Well, the early part of Mark’s Gospel is a bit like Guess Who. At least, it is for the disciples. They spend the first eight chapters trying to figure out exactly who Jesus is. Look out for the number of times people are amazed and confused in these early chapters.

It’s slightly easier for us — Mark starts his whole Gospel with a very big hint. Check out verse 1: *“The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”*

“Gospel” of course means “good news”, and as somebody once said: “If you don’t think the good news about Jesus is the best thing you’ve



ever heard, you can be sure you haven’t really understood it.”

We see why Jesus is such good news as we start to understand what He is like. God in human flesh, walking on earth and stepping into history. He shows us what God is like — His power and compassion as He defeats evil and brings healing and forgiveness. He even invites us into His amazing kingdom!

Who is this man?

Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He’s finally here and that’s not just good news; it’s great news!



1

Get ready!

Mark's story of Jesus is fast-paced. It's like a film with scene changes every few verses. He's got some great news to share and he's not going to get bogged down with loads of description. So let's not hang around...

Read Mark 1 v 1

Jesus means "God saves". Christ means "God's chosen King" and the Son of God is self-explanatory.

Read verses 2–8

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▷ *Who is the quote from Isaiah talking about?*
- ▷ *Who is he preparing the way for?*

Stop for a minute and let that really sink in. Hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, Isaiah dropped a huge bombshell. God Himself would come. To earth. In person. And now it's happening — John the Baptist is the messenger announcing the King's imminent arrival.

- ▷ *What does John say is the first step towards forgiveness? (v4)*

It's pretty difficult to forgive someone who doesn't think they've done anything wrong. Repentance —

recognising and turning away from your sin — is an important first step.

- ▷ *What do you make of John's interesting fashion and diet choices? (v6)*

John was basically following the prophet dress code from the Old Testament. He was the last prophet before Jesus — God's final, perfect word to humanity — arrived.

PRAY ABOUT IT

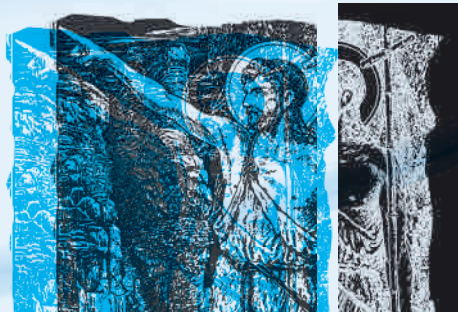
Thank God for sending His Son to us. Tell Him what that means to you.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Jesus is good news!

TAKE IT FURTHER

Are you ready for more? Try p110.





2

Baptism, blessing & temptation

There's a lot going on in these four verses as we see Jesus for the first time. But His first appearance doesn't just come out of nowhere — it has been hinted at through the whole Old Testament.

Read Mark 1 v 9–13

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

List the things that happen when Jesus is baptised:

-
-
-

What do we learn about Jesus?

We get an amazing insight into Jesus' status as the eternally loved Son of God. Here, God the Father confirms who Jesus is and His delight in Him. The Holy Spirit (the third member of the Trinity) is also involved in blessing this mission as Jesus begins His rescue of humanity.

What happens to Jesus next? (v12–13)

Can you think of any other events that took place in the desert, related to the number 40?

When God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt (see the book of Exodus), they wandered around in the desert for 40 years because they gave in to temptation and put God to the test. Jesus' time in the desert shows Him resisting temptation and being the perfectly obedient Son that Israel never was.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God that Jesus is His perfect Son, who came to rescue us and who was perfectly qualified to do so, never sinning or failing as we do.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Jesus is perfectly qualified to rescue us.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Flutter over to page 110.



3

Here comes the kingdom

Now we hear Jesus speak for the first time in Mark's Gospel — what will He say? What is His agenda going to be? What effect will it have?

Read Mark 1 v 14–15

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

What is Jesus' message? (v15)

God's plan to rescue the world, which was planned before the world was even created, is about to take place. The "kingdom of God" means God ruling over His people. The kingdom is near because the King has arrived, and the way in is to turn from sin and accept the good news of Jesus' rescue.

Read verses 16–20

What does Jesus say to these fishermen? (v16–20)

How do they respond?

Is this surprising?

What do they leave behind?

What do you think Jesus means in v17?

It's a massive thing to suddenly leave everything — family, friends, job and home — just because a stranger tells you to. But Jesus has the authority to demand that. He's not necessarily asking us to leave home but He's still asking us to follow Him today.

GET ON WITH IT

Have you answered Jesus' call?

Are you following Him?

Is He more important than your friends, family, career or possessions?

Do you know what it means to repent and believe the good news and have you experienced that in your own life?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Talk to God honestly about your answers.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Kingdom come — page 110.



4

The Holy One of God

We see more examples of Jesus' extraordinary authority now as He teaches, heals and casts out evil spirits. Prepare to be amazed...

Read Mark 1 v 21–34

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

1 *What is so unusual about Jesus' teaching? (v22)*

Jesus was more impressive than the teachers of the law. They would back up their teaching from the Old Testament, just as we look to the Bible. But Jesus' authority comes from Himself — God inspired the scriptures in the first place!

2 *What does the unclean spirit recognise about Jesus? (v24)*

3 *How does Jesus deal with it?*

4 *How do the people around react? (v27–28)*

5 *What is the next thing Jesus does?*

6 *What does it show about Him? (v29–31)*



7 *What is Simon's mother-in-law's reaction? (v31)*

8 *What else does Jesus do? What does this show us? (v32–34)*

All these miracles point to the sort of kingdom this King is bringing — one without evil or sickness.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God that we have such a powerful and compassionate King in Jesus. Pray that you would listen to His teaching and obey it because He is the ultimate authority.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Jesus is the ultimate authority.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Want some more? Try page 110.



5

Miracle man

The news is spreading – Jesus is something special, even if people aren't quite sure what that means yet. But right now, He needs some time alone to focus on His real priorities.

Read Mark 1 v 35–45

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ↳ *What does Jesus do in v35?*
- ↳ *What does this show about how important prayer is to Him?*
- ↳ *How important is it to you to spend time talking to your Heavenly Father?*

PRAY ABOUT IT

Ask God to give you the same desire for spending time talking to Him that Jesus had. Prayer can be hard — we need God's Spirit to help us.

- ↳ *When the disciples find Him, what does Jesus say is His priority?*
- ↳ *Does this surprise you? Do you really see preaching as the main reason He came?*
- ↳ *How does that affect how you listen to Jesus' words in the Bible?*

Despite his main priority, Jesus still has time for individuals.

- ↳ *What does He do for the man with leprosy? (v41–42)*

According to Old Testament law, touching an unclean person like this leper would make you unclean. But Jesus is so holy that instead His cleanness transfers over to the unclean leper!

- ↳ *Can you think of another way in which Jesus will do that for unclean/sinful people?*

Check out Acts 10 v 36–43.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Now use those powerful verses as you talk to God.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Shhh! Keep quiet and go to page 111.



6

Raising the roof

What is your greatest need? For the starving it might seem like food; the lonely might say relationship. Your answer is probably driven by your circumstances. But Jesus has a very different take on things.

Read Mark 2 v 1–5

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

▷ *Just how popular is Jesus? (v1–2)*

▷ *How desperate are the men with the paralysed friend? (v4)*

▷ *Why is Jesus' response to them so surprising? (v5)*

▷ *What do they expect Him to do?*

Being sinful and unforgiven is such a bad situation that it makes being paralysed seem like a minor issue!

Read verses 6–12

▷ *Why are the teachers of the law so outraged? (v6–7)*

▷ *Are they right?*

Only God can forgive sins. Only the wronged person can offer forgiveness. As all sin is ultimately against God, only He can forgive it.

▷ *So what's Jesus claiming?*

▷ *How would you answer Jesus' question in v9?*

On one hand it seems harder to heal someone than merely say: "Your sins are forgiven". But real forgiveness is much harder. It was so difficult and costly that it led Jesus to the cross.

▷ *How does Jesus prove His authority? (v10–11)*

▷ *What's the reaction? (v12)*

PRAY ABOUT IT

"Forgive us our sins" says the Lord's Prayer. Have you asked for God's forgiveness today and thanked Him that it is possible through Jesus' death and resurrection?

THE BOTTOM LINE

Jesus can forgive our sins!

TAKE IT FURTHER

Grab some more on page 111.



7

Sin sickness

When someone is diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, their immediate reaction can often be denial — refusing to accept reality. But that's a dangerous place to be when it comes to our spiritual health.

Read Mark 2 v 13–17

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

Ix *Who is the surprise choice for new disciple? (v14)*

If you tell someone you work for the tax office these days it might go down like a brick in water. Back in Jesus' day it meant you were collaborating with the enemy occupiers (the Romans) and probably squeezing more money out of people than you were entitled too. Tax collector = traitor and crook.

Ix *Who is Jesus spending time with? (v15)*

Ix *What is the reaction of the religious and "respectable" people? (v16)*

Ix *Have they got a point?*

Ix *How does Jesus explain his actions? (v17)*

The "sinners" and tax collectors had a huge advantage over the "religious" people. They knew they needed God's mercy and forgiveness. To use Jesus' metaphor, they knew they were sick and needed a doctor.

The irony is that everyone is sick and needs a doctor. But many people are in denial and think they're good enough for God. They don't think they're sick and so won't turn to Jesus for help. It's a dangerous place to be.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Have you admitted your need of Jesus' forgiveness? Do you judge people who seem to be worse "sinners" than you? Ask God to help you see people the way Jesus does.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Jesus came for sinners.

TAKE IT FURTHER

More treatment on page 111.



8

Fast and furious

What do you think a “religious” or “spiritual” person should be like? Think about it for a moment and then let’s see if Jesus fits your description.

Read Mark 2 v 18–20

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

Going without food for a time to concentrate on prayer was often a way of showing sorrow and repentance for sin.

- 1b** *Why does Jesus say this is inappropriate for His followers? (v19–20)*

You don’t generally choose to mourn and go without food at a wedding — it’s a celebration! Jesus’ presence (remember He’s the King) brings great joy to His followers. But notice the hint, even early on in Mark’s Gospel, that sad times are coming (v20).

Read verses 21–22

- 1c** *What point do you think Jesus is making about old ways of relating to God and how His coming changes things? (v21–22)*

You couldn’t just slot Jesus and His message into the Jewish religion.

He’d come to do something that, while fulfilling the Old Testament, was radically new. And He was its focus.

PRAY ABOUT IT

One of the characteristics of a Christian is joy. Even when circumstances are hard, we can have great joy because we know and love the King and are known and loved by Him. Ask God to help you to know that joy and to share it with people around you.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Jesus is our joy!

TAKE IT FURTHER

Go to page 111... fast!



9

An ear for trouble

Mark has been revealing Jesus to us. So far, no one around Jesus has really worked out who He is. The religious leaders were the blindest of all. Let's see them completely miss the point again.

Read Mark 2 v 23–28**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

- ▷ *What was the Sabbath all about in Jewish life? (Check out Exodus 20 v 8–11)*
 - ▷ *What was Jesus being criticised for? (v23–24)*
- By Jesus' day the command not to work on the Sabbath had been so twisted that even the disciples picking a few ears of corn to eat was classified as work. According to the Pharisees, they were breaking the Sabbath and sinning.
- ▷ *How does Jesus deal with this accusation? (v25–26)*
 - ▷ *What does Jesus point out about the purpose of the Sabbath? (v27)*
 - ▷ *Why do you think we find it easier to think God is trying to spoil our fun than care for us?*

- ▷ *What does Jesus claim about Himself? (v28)*

God gave the Sabbath to His people for their benefit, not to make life harder for them. The religious leaders had missed the point again. But more amazingly than that, Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath — He created the Sabbath and He's the one who gives perfect rest.

SHARE IT

When you're chatting with friends, how can you dispel the myth that God is out to spoil our fun?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus. Ask Him to help you follow Jesus with your whole life, rather than just trying to keep the rules.

THE BOTTOM LINE

We find true rest in Jesus.

TAKE IT FURTHER

More wise words on page 111.