

The Gospel of Mark, Teacher's Guide

Week 2: Authority That Astonishes

Mark 1:21–45

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Mark 1:21–45 is a fast-paced showcase of the authority of Jesus the King. Having declared in verses 1–20 who Jesus is and what He has come to proclaim, Mark now shows the kingdom breaking in. In rapid-fire scenes (the synagogue exorcism, the healing in Peter's home, the evening crowds at the door, the dawn prayer, the Galilean preaching tour, and the cleansing of the leper), Jesus exercises His authority over demonic powers, disease, the demands of the crowd, His own schedule, and even the ceremonial uncleanness defined by the Mosaic Law.

The teacher's task this week is twofold. First, sharpen students' doctrinal grasp of what is actually being claimed in this passage. The authority of Jesus' teaching is grounded in His divine identity. Satan and the demonic realm are real, and Jesus treats them as such. Christ's authority over both spiritual and physical realms is absolute. The "Messianic secret" serves God's purposes for revealing Jesus on His own timing and through the right witnesses. Jesus is conscious of His Father-given mission and orders His life around it. And the ceremonial uncleanness of the Old Law has been overcome by the cleansing power of the One who fulfills the Law. Where students encounter cultural skepticism about demons, miracles, or the supernatural, they need a confident, biblically grounded response.

Second, and this is the heart of the lesson, drive every doctrinal truth toward genuine spiritual formation. Jesus is not looking for impressed admirers. He is looking for transformed disciples. He is forming people whose "unclean spirits" (entrenched sin patterns, deep-rooted fears, identity-shaping lies) are being driven out, whose healing flows into immediate service, whose lives are anchored in unhurried prayer with the Father, whose priorities are shaped by mission rather than by demand, and whose hands are willing to touch what others avoid. The goal of this lesson, and of the entire Gospel of Mark, is not just better-informed church members. It is members who, week by week, look and sound and love a little more like the Jesus they study.

Question 1

Student Question:

The people in the Capernaum synagogue were "astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes" (v. 22). What was different about the source of Jesus' teaching authority compared to the scribes, and what does this scene reveal about who Jesus is and how the Word of God ought to be heard today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The scribes taught by stringing together the opinions of previous rabbis. “Rabbi Hillel said this, but Rabbi Shammai said that.” Their authority was always borrowed. Jesus simply spoke. He did not appeal to outside authorities because He is the Authority. He spoke the words of God because He is the Word of God (John 1:1). What astonished the synagogue was not just the content of His teaching but the source. He did not interpret the text from outside it. He stood at its center.

This is one of the deepest implications of Christ’s identity. Hebrews 1:1–2 says that God, who once spoke through the prophets at many times and in many ways, has now spoken to us by His Son. When Jesus teaches, God is speaking. His words carry the weight of the One who created the universe. This is why Jesus could say things like, “You have heard that it was said, but I say to you” (Matthew 5). Such authority on any other lips would have been blasphemy. On His, it is simply the truth.

For the church today, this passage establishes the absolute authority of Christ’s teaching and, by extension, of the inspired Scriptures that record it. The same Lord who spoke in the synagogue at Capernaum has spoken finally and fully through His apostles in the New Testament (Hebrews 1:1–2; Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:19–21). His Word is not one voice among many to be weighed against cultural opinion, personal preference, or competing experts. It is the final, authoritative voice that ought to settle every question of faith and practice.

Pastorally, the question this scene presses on every disciple is not whether we believe the Bible in theory but whether we let it overrule us in practice. When Scripture says one thing and our desires, our culture, or the latest expert says another, which one wins?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The divine authority of Jesus in His teaching, grounded in His identity as the eternal Son (John 1:1; Hebrews 1:1–2)
- Scripture as the final authority in faith and life (2 Timothy 3:16–17; Jude 3)
- The contrast between borrowed religious authority and the inherent authority of Christ
- The danger of cultural opinion or personal preference functioning as a competing voice

Discussion Prompts

- How would you explain to someone the difference between Jesus’ authority and the authority of a great teacher or moral philosopher?
- What does it mean, practically, to let the Word of Christ settle a question once and for all?
- Where in our culture today do you see competing authorities most aggressively pressing against Scripture?

Question 2

Student Question:

An unclean spirit cries out, “I know who you are, the Holy One of God!” (v. 24). The demons recognized Jesus with perfect accuracy and yet remained His enemies. Where in your own walk are you tempted to mistake correct knowledge about Jesus for actual surrender to Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The demons in this passage make stunningly accurate theological statements. They identify Jesus by name, by hometown, and by His unique identity as “the Holy One of God.” James says even the demons believe in God and shudder (James 2:19). What they do not do is surrender. They know who Jesus is, and they hate Him. They cannot be saved by their accurate doctrine because there is no repentance in it, no trust, no submission.

This is a sobering corrective for any of us tempted to equate Christianity with right information. A person can pass a Bible quiz, recite the plan of salvation, identify every doctrinal error in the room, and still be miles from genuine discipleship. The line that separates a disciple from a demon is not knowledge. It is whether one bows the knee. Saving faith always involves trust, repentance, and obedient submission to Jesus as Lord (Matthew 7:21–23; Romans 10:9–10).

Pastorally, this scene gently exposes a temptation that often hides in long-tenured church members. We have heard the stories so many times that we forget to ask, “Am I actually following Him?” The question is not whether you can answer correctly about Jesus, but whether your daily life is being reshaped by Him.

Press students to be honest and specific. Where is your knowledge of Jesus running ahead of your surrender? Is there a teaching of His you know well, can quote, can argue for, and quietly disregard in the way you live? This is one of the most important questions any Christian can ask, and one of the easiest to avoid.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Mere intellectual belief is not saving faith (James 2:19; Matthew 7:21–23)
- Saving faith involves trust, repentance, and obedience, not only correct knowledge
- Genuine faith always produces a transformed life (Romans 10:9–10; James 2:14–26)
- The danger of religious familiarity that lacks personal surrender

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it possible to have correct beliefs about Jesus and still be far from Him?
- How can we tell the difference between “knowing about Jesus” and “following Jesus” in our own lives?
- What specific teaching of Jesus do you know well but find hardest to actually obey?

Question 3

Student Question:

Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit with a simple command, and it obeys instantly (vv. 25–26). What does this scene teach us about the reality of the spiritual realm, the nature of demonic activity, and the absolute authority of Christ in the spiritual battle the church is engaged in (Ephesians 6:10–12)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This passage forces a doctrinal issue many modern Christians would rather ignore. The reality of personal, intelligent, spiritual evil. Jesus does not treat the demon as a metaphor for mental illness, social oppression, or a personality disorder. Mark in verse 32 actually distinguishes between “those who were sick and those who were oppressed by demons,” showing that the New Testament does not collapse the two categories. Throughout Scripture, Satan is presented as a real, fallen, created being with intelligence, will, and a kingdom of fellow rebels, yet always subordinate to God’s sovereign authority (Job 1; Ephesians 6:10–12; 1 Peter 5:8).

There are two opposite errors to guard against. The first is denial, pretending the spiritual realm does not exist or treating talk of demons as a leftover from a pre-scientific age. The second is obsession, seeing a demon behind every difficulty and treating spiritual warfare as a kind of dramatic combat requiring special techniques. The biblical picture is sober and confident. Christians live in a real spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:12), but they do so under a Lord whom even the demons must obey at a word.

The biblical pattern for the Christian in this battle is not to engage in personal exorcism ministries or to command demons by name. The biblical pattern is to “put on the whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11), to “submit to God” and “resist the devil” so that he flees (James 4:7), to be “sober-minded” and “watchful” (1 Peter 5:8), and to trust that Christ has already triumphed (Colossians 2:13–15). Healthy spiritual warfare looks like ordinary, faithful Christian living. Prayer, the Word, holiness, fellowship, and the proclamation of the gospel.

Practically, this teaching changes prayer and temptation. We pray not as those crying into the void but as those addressing the One whose mere word silences powers of darkness. We face temptation not as those who must defeat the enemy on our own but as those who already stand in the victory of Christ. And we live not as victims of unseen forces but as people whose Lord has already disarmed them at the cross.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The personal reality of Satan and demons (Mark 1:34; Ephesians 6:10–12; 1 Peter 5:8)
- Christ’s absolute authority over the powers of darkness (Colossians 2:13–15)
- Distinction between spiritual oppression and physical illness, while both are real (Mark 1:34)
- Avoiding both naturalistic denial and dramatized obsession with demons
- Spiritual warfare grounded in the finished work of Christ and the armor of God (Ephesians 6)
- Ordinary Christian disciplines (prayer, Scripture, holiness, fellowship) as the true weapons of the believer

Discussion Prompts

- How do modern Christians sometimes minimize or exaggerate the reality of the spiritual realm?
- What is the difference between biblical spiritual warfare and dramatized “deliverance ministry” practices not found in the New Testament?
- How does Christ’s authority over the powers of darkness shape the way you pray and the way you face temptation?

Question 4

Student Question:

After leaving the synagogue, Jesus heals Simon’s mother-in-law, and immediately “she began to serve them” (vv. 29–31). What does her response teach us about why Jesus heals and restores us, and what does it look like for your own experience of His grace to overflow into service?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Mark gives us this scene in only three verses, but it is a small portrait of what discipleship looks like. Simon’s mother-in-law was bedridden with fever. Jesus took her by the hand, lifted her up, and the fever left her. Notice the next sentence. “And she began to serve them.” She did not retreat to her room to rest. She did not call attention to her experience. She did what people in restored relationship with God always do. She used her recovered strength to bless others.

This is a key piece of the Bible’s vision of spiritual formation. We are not healed simply so we can be comfortable. We are healed for service. The same God who restored her stands ready to restore us (from sickness, from sin, from guilt, from despair, from broken relationships, from years of running in the wrong direction), and the proper response to that grace is not first to enjoy our restoration but to join Him in His mission. Ephesians 2:8–10 captures this beautifully. We are saved by grace through faith, not because of works, yet we are created in Christ Jesus for good works that He prepared in advance for us to do.

Pastorally, this is one of those quiet but searching texts. Many people come to Jesus burdened, broken, or weary, receive His grace, and then settle in to simply enjoy being healed. Mark shows us a different pattern. The deepest answer to “What should I do now that Jesus has touched my life?” is some form of, “Get up and serve.”

Press students to name a specific way their gratitude could become action this week. Spiritual formation usually happens in concrete next steps, not in vague resolutions to be more grateful.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Restoration in Christ is for the purpose of service, not just personal comfort (Ephesians 2:8–10; Titus 2:11–14)

- Saving grace produces a working life devoted to good works prepared in advance by God
- Discipleship is participation in Christ's mission, not consumption of His benefits
- Healing (physical, emotional, spiritual) is meant to overflow into others' lives

Discussion Prompts

- What gifts, experiences, or healings has Jesus given you that He may be calling you to use in service?
- Why is it so easy to settle into a "consumer" faith rather than a "servant" faith?
- What is one concrete way your gratitude to Christ this week could move from feeling to action?

Question 5

Student Question:

When the crowds gathered at evening, Jesus healed many "and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him" (vv. 32–34). Why does Jesus silence the demons, even though their testimony was technically accurate, and what does this teach us about how the identity of Jesus is to be revealed?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Mark notes carefully that Jesus "would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him." This is the beginning of what scholars often call the "Messianic secret" in Mark's Gospel. Throughout the first half of the book, Jesus repeatedly silences those who would publicly proclaim Him as Messiah, especially demons (1:25, 34; 3:11–12; 5:7) and the recipients of certain miracles (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26). Even after Peter's confession, Jesus warns the disciples to "tell no one about him" (8:30). This is one of the most distinctive features of Mark's narrative.

Why would Jesus silence accurate testimony about His identity? Several reasons emerge from the text. First, the testimony of demons is not the kind of witness Jesus wants. He is not building a movement on the proclamation of unclean spirits. Their words may be technically accurate, but they are spoken in opposition, not in faith. Imagine an evangelist whose only endorsers are enemies of the gospel. The endorsement would damage the message, not commend it. Truth in the wrong mouth, at the wrong moment, does damage rather than good.

Second, the popular conception of "Messiah" in first-century Israel was deeply distorted. Many expected a political deliverer who would overthrow Rome and restore the throne of David in earthly terms. If Jesus had openly accepted this title in the opening chapters of His ministry, He would have been swept up in expectations that were the opposite of what He had come to fulfill. Mark shows that Jesus carefully manages how, when, and through whom His identity is disclosed, so that when "Messiah" is finally and openly declared (Mark 14:61–62, before

Caiaphas), it is unmistakably tied to suffering, the cross, and resurrection, not to political revolution.

Third, the deepest revelation of who Jesus is must come not through demonic shouts but through the cross. The Roman centurion at the foot of the cross will eventually say, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39). That confession, born of watching how Jesus dies, is the kind of confession the gospel produces. Mark’s whole narrative is moving toward that climactic moment, and Jesus refuses to let demonic publicity short-circuit it.

For the church today, this passage teaches something important about evangelism and identity. The gospel is not advanced by sensational testimony or impressive endorsements. It is advanced by the cross-shaped lives of disciples who proclaim Christ crucified and risen. The truth about Jesus must be told the right way, by the right witnesses, in the right time, with the cross at the center.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The “Messianic secret” theme in Mark (1:25, 34; 3:11–12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9)
- The misuse of accurate testimony when offered by enemies of the gospel
- Christ’s wisdom in revealing His identity on God’s timing, not the crowd’s
- The cross as the central means by which Jesus’ true identity is disclosed (Mark 15:39)
- The distinction in Mark 1:34 between physical illness and demonic oppression

Discussion Prompts

- Why might Jesus refuse the demons’ testimony, even when their words were technically accurate?
- What does this scene teach about how the church today should think about sensational endorsements or testimony?
- How does the cross shape the way we proclaim who Jesus is?

Question 6

Student Question:

Very early the next morning, “while it was still dark,” Jesus rose and went out to a desolate place to pray (v. 35). If even Jesus needed this kind of unhurried time with the Father, what does that say about your own prayer life, and where in your daily rhythm is the place of quiet with God most likely to get crowded out?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The day before had been exhausting. Teaching, exorcism, healing in Peter’s home, an entire town at the door. By every measure, Jesus had earned a slow morning. Instead, He rose while it was still dark, went outside the bustling fishing village, found a desolate place, and prayed. This

little verse is one of the most quietly searching texts in the Gospels. If the Son of God Himself (the One with perfect communion with the Father and unlimited access to divine resources) needed this kind of unhurried, secluded time with God, what does that imply about us?

Most Christians know, in theory, that prayer matters. Most of us also know that our actual prayer life is shorter, more rushed, and more reactive than we want it to be. Mark is not condemning us. He is showing us the pattern that produced the kind of Jesus we read about. Notice the order. Jesus prays, then He goes out to the next towns. Strength preceded service. Direction preceded demand. Communion preceded compassion. We tend to reverse the order. We run on empty, get desperate, and then pray.

Pastorally, this is a question to press gently but seriously. The transformational question is not “Should I pray more?” It is, “Who am I becoming when prayer is the first thing pushed out of my day?” Spiritual formation in the Bible is never primarily about adding religious activities. It is about ordering our lives so that we are with the Father long enough, often enough, and deeply enough to begin to look like His Son. Jesus’ dawn walk into the desolate place is a quiet, life-changing invitation.

Encourage students to think small and concrete. A consistent ten-minute morning rhythm of Scripture and prayer will form the soul more than an aspirational hour that never actually happens. The goal is communion, not performance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The example of Jesus’ prayer life and dependence on the Father in His human nature
- Prayer as the foundation, not the supplement, of fruitful ministry and discipleship (Luke 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- Spiritual formation depends on time spent with God, not just information about God
- The danger of activity-driven faith disconnected from communion with God

Discussion Prompts

- Why is unhurried prayer time so easily crowded out of our days?
- What rhythms or habits have helped you (or could help you) carve out quiet time with God?
- What does it look like to begin a day in the way Jesus began this one?

Question 7

Student Question:

When the disciples find Him, Jesus says, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out” (v. 38). What does this declaration reveal about Jesus’ self-understanding of His Father-given mission, and what does it teach the church today about the priority of preaching the Word?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The disciples come looking for Jesus with a perfectly reasonable agenda. “Everyone is looking for you.” The crowds in Capernaum want more. More teaching, more healing, more miracles. Most of us would have stayed. Jesus does not. He says, in effect, “That is not why I came.” He says it plainly. “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” This is one of the most important self-disclosures of Jesus’ mission in the early chapters of Mark.

Several doctrinal truths come into focus. First, Jesus had a clear, conscious sense of His Father-given mission. He had “come out” for a specific purpose, and He knew it. This corresponds to the larger New Testament witness that Jesus was sent from the Father into the world (John 6:38; John 17:4; Galatians 4:4; 1 John 4:9–10). His mission was not improvised. It was determined in eternity past and carried out in the fullness of time.

Second, Jesus identifies preaching as central to that mission. He could have said, “for that is why I came out,” and meant healing, or feeding, or building a movement. Instead, He says it about preaching. The proclamation of the kingdom and the call to repent and believe are not peripheral to His mission. They are at the heart of it. The miracles authenticate the message, but the message itself is the central work.

This shapes the church profoundly. The same Jesus who told the crowds at Capernaum that He must preach to the next town also tells His disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), and “preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). Paul says, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17), and “How are they to hear without someone preaching?” (Romans 10:14). A church that emphasizes its programs, its benevolence, its worship style, or its community life, while neglecting the preached Word, has wandered from the very purpose Jesus declared for His own ministry.

Pastorally, this also models something important for every Christian. Jesus knew what He had been sent to do, and He let that knowledge shape His decisions. He was not driven by demand. He was directed by mission. The faithful disciple lives the same way, with a clear sense of what the Father is calling him or her to do, and the courage to say no to good things in order to say yes to God’s specific call.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Jesus’ clear consciousness of His Father-given mission (John 6:38; John 17:4; Galatians 4:4)
- The centrality of preaching the gospel in Jesus’ ministry and in the mission of the church (Mark 16:15; Romans 10:13–17; 2 Timothy 4:1–5)
- Miracles as authenticating signs, with the proclaimed Word as the central work
- The legitimacy of saying no to good things to be faithful to a God-given calling
- Faithfulness to mission rather than responsiveness to crowd demand

Discussion Prompts

- Why is preaching, rather than programs or activities, the central work the New Testament gives to the church?
- What pressures pull a congregation away from the priority of the preached Word?
- What does it look like for an individual Christian to live with a clear sense of God-given mission?

Question 8

Student Question:

A leper comes to Jesus saying, "If you will, you can make me clean" (v. 40). What kind of faith does that confession reveal, and what does the leper's willingness to even approach Jesus teach you about bringing the shameful, embarrassing, or "untouchable" places of your own life to Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Leprosy in the ancient world was not just a physical disease. It was a social and religious death sentence. According to Leviticus 13–14, a leper had to live outside the camp, wear torn clothes, leave his hair unkempt, and cry out "Unclean! Unclean!" to warn others away. He could not enter the synagogue, could not embrace his family, could not work, could not worship in the temple. For this man to come into a town and approach a rabbi was a violation of every cultural rule.

And yet he comes. He throws himself on his knees and says, "If you will, you can make me clean." The faith here is striking. He has no doubt about Jesus' power. His only question is about Jesus' willingness. He knows Jesus can heal. He is asking whether Jesus will. That is faith laced with humility, courage, and trust. He does not demand. He does not bargain. He simply lays the truth of his life at the feet of Jesus and waits.

Pastorally, this is exactly the posture every disciple must learn. We all carry "leprous" places in our lives. Sins we are ashamed of, weaknesses we hide, regrets that follow us, addictions or losses we are afraid to bring into the light. The leper teaches us how to approach Jesus with those places. We do not need to clean them up first. We do not need to pretend they are not there. We come on our knees, with empty hands, and we say honestly, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And we discover that He will.

There is also a quiet challenge here for the church. The leper had to be willing to come, and the disciples around Jesus had to be willing to let him through. A congregation that loves the Lord well will be a place where "leprous" people can come without fear of being shamed away. We are to be a community of cleansed lepers, not a community of polished people.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith that combines confidence in Christ's power with submission to His will
- The depth of human uncleanness and our inability to cleanse ourselves
- Approaching Christ honestly with shame, sin, and weakness (Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 1:9)
- The local church as a community where broken people can come to Christ without shame

Discussion Prompts

- What "leprous" places in your life are you still hesitant to bring to Jesus?
- What is the difference between a demanding prayer and the leper's humble, submissive faith?
- How can we make sure our church is a place where broken people can come to Christ without fear?

Question 9

Student Question:

"Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him" (v. 41). Under the Law, touching a leper made a person ceremonially unclean, yet when Jesus touched him, the leper was made clean instead. Then Jesus sends the man to the priest "as Moses commanded" (v. 44). What does this scene teach us about Jesus' relationship to the Mosaic Law and the unique holiness He brings into a world of uncleanness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is one of the most theologically beautiful sentences in Mark. Jesus could have healed the leper with a word, as He had just healed an entire town that way. Instead, Jesus reaches out His hand. He touches a man who has not been touched in years. He does what no one else in that whole region would dare to do. And the result is a stunning reversal. Instead of the leper's uncleanness contaminating Jesus, Jesus' holiness cleanses the leper. The cleansing power of God flows in a direction no priest could have anticipated.

Doctrinally, this scene reveals something profound about the Person of Christ. He is the One whose holiness is so pure and so powerful that it overcomes uncleanness rather than being defiled by it (Hebrews 7:26). The Old Law could declare a person unclean. It could not make a person clean. Jesus does what the Law could not do. The whole sacrificial system pointed forward to this, a cleansing not by ritual but by the touch of God Himself in the flesh (Hebrews 10:1–14).

At the same time, Jesus then sends the man to the priest in obedience to Leviticus 14, "for a proof to them." Jesus does not abolish the Mosaic Law during His earthly ministry. He fulfills it (Matthew 5:17). He sends the cleansed man through the proper channels of the existing covenant so that the priest will examine him, declare him clean, and offer the required sacrifices. Jesus honors the Old Law even as He reveals what the Law was always pointing

toward. The Law could identify the disease. Only Jesus could cure it. The Law could declare a person ceremonially clean after a cure. Only Jesus could perform the cure itself. This is the proper way to think about Christ and the Law at this stage of redemptive history. Jesus operates within the Mosaic covenant during His earthly ministry while simultaneously bringing the new covenant that will eventually fulfill and replace it (a theme Mark will develop further in chapter 2).

Pastorally, and this is the place to linger, the application is unavoidable. The Jesus we follow is the kind of King who reaches out and touches “untouchable” people. If we are being shaped into His likeness, our lives will begin to show this same posture. There are people in every congregation, every neighborhood, every workplace whom the world has marked “unclean” in some way (by lifestyle, by failure, by illness, by reputation, by social standing). Disciples of Jesus learn to move toward them, not away from them, not afraid of being contaminated, but trusting that the holiness of Christ in us is meant to bless and bless and bless.

Be careful here, however, to anchor compassion in truth. Touching the leper did not mean ignoring the leper’s condition. Jesus healed him, sent him to be examined by the priest, and brought him back into the worshiping community. Christian compassion never pretends sin is not sin. It brings the cleansing power of Christ to bear on real sin and real suffering. We do not lower the standard. We offer the cleansing.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The unique, contagious holiness of Jesus that cleanses rather than being defiled (Hebrews 7:26)
- Christ’s fulfillment of the Mosaic Law, not its abolition (Matthew 5:17)
- Christ’s submission to the existing Mosaic order during His earthly ministry (sending the leper to the priest per Leviticus 14)
- The Old Law as preparatory to and fulfilled in the cleansing work of Christ (Hebrews 10:1–14)
- True Christian compassion holds together holiness and mercy without compromising either

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that Jesus’ holiness is contagious in a cleansing direction, while ours is so easily contagious in the wrong direction?
- How does this scene help you think about Jesus’ relationship to the Old Testament Law?
- Who in your life or community has been treated as “unclean” by the surrounding culture, and how might Jesus be calling His church to reach out and touch them?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking at this passage as a whole, every scene shows Jesus' authority being exercised on behalf of broken people. What kind of person is Jesus shaping His disciples to become through these encounters, and what is one specific way you sense Him forming that kind of life in you this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Step back and look at Mark 1:21–45 as a single panorama. In every scene, Jesus exercises authority, but never to dominate. He drives out a demon from a tormented man. He lifts a feverish woman to a life of service. He spends an evening healing the broken. He rises before dawn to be with the Father. He keeps moving so the good news reaches the next town. He stops on the road to touch a leper. By the end of the chapter, Mark has given us a portrait not just of a powerful Lord but of the kind of life His followers will be shaped to live.

Notice the contours of that life. A disciple of Jesus is being freed from what enslaves, slowly, patiently, sometimes painfully, but really. A disciple is being healed into service, not into self-absorption. A disciple is being anchored in unhurried prayer with the Father, the secret behind everything else. A disciple is being formed in clarity of mission, learning to say no to good things for the sake of God's best. A disciple is being shaped in compassion that reaches out and touches what others avoid. That is the kind of Christian Jesus is making.

Press students here to be honest and specific. The goal of this study is never information for its own sake. The goal is people who, slowly but truly, look more like Jesus (more delivered, more serving, more praying, more focused, more compassionate) at the end of these twenty weeks than they did at the beginning. Invite each student to name one area where they sense Jesus shaping that kind of life in them right now, and to commit to a single, specific next step.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Discipleship as ongoing transformation into the likeness of Christ (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18)
- The integrated life of the disciple: deliverance, service, prayer, mission, compassion
- Spiritual formation as the goal of biblical study, not mere accumulation of information
- Faithful churches as communities being shaped collectively to resemble Jesus

Discussion Prompts

- Which of the “marks of a disciple” in this passage stands out to you most this week (deliverance, service, prayer, mission, or compassion)?
- Where do you sense Jesus actively forming that mark in your own life right now?
- What is one concrete next step you could take this week to cooperate with that work?