

EZEKIEL + MARK

A 12-WEEK BIBLE READING PLAN

USING THIS READING GUIDE

This guide will take you through 12 weeks of Bible reading with five readings each week.

Each week, four of the five readings will be from the book of Mark, which tells the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. By the end of the 12 weeks, you will have read the entire book of Mark. With each reading we have included questions for reflection. Use these questions and writing in whatever way is helpful for you.

One of the five readings each will be from the book of Ezekiel. This reading will include some explanatory notes and questions for reflection. The entire text of the book of Ezekiel is not included in this reading guide. However, if you would like to read the entire book, we have included the chapters to read each week in order to finish all of Ezekiel in 12 weeks.

READING THE BOOK OF MARK

The book of Mark is one of four biographies of Jesus found in the New Testament. It is the earliest of the four biographies, with the other biographers borrowing from Mark. Mark is also the shortest, not commenting much on Jesus words and actions, rather recording them in compact, simple language.

One temptation when reading the Bible is to assume we already know what it means. Particularly in reading something like the life of Jesus, we might tend to project on to the text our assumptions about who Jesus is and what he is about.

One thing you will notice throughout the text is that Jesus constantly confounds the religious people that he encounters. If we take Jesus seriously, we will often find that he confounds us as well. Jesus does not enter our lives to confirm how we were already living, but instead to introduce us to the radical way of the Kingdom of God.

I encourage you to sit with these texts in all of their beauty and ambiguity. Let Jesus challenge your assumptions about God, the gospel, and life itself. Read prayerfully and expectantly, letting the Spirit make these ancient words alive for you in new ways.

READING THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

In some ways, Ezekiel might be one of the most difficult books in the Bible. It is full of strange images, confounding symbolism, and violent imagery. God's judgment in this book is so severe that it can be hard to read. At the same time, the message of Ezekiel is actually fairly simple. God's people have sinned, and are being judged. Their only hope is to repent and place their hope in the mercy of God. If they do, God wants to pour his love on them.

The setting of the book of Ezekiel takes a bit of explaining. The people of Israel, after centuries of disobedience and idolatry, have been punished by God. They have been defeated by the armies of Babylon, and some of them have been taken into exile in Babylon. It is in Babylon where Ezekiel receives his call and prophecies. At times, the setting of the book changes as God gives Ezekiel visions of other places, such as Jerusalem.

Perhaps the most difficult question for 21st century Christians reading the book of Ezekiel is, "What do ancient judgments against the Israelites mean for us today?" In particular, we might wonder how the message of judgment fits with the God of mercy who is revealed in Christ's death on the cross.

While there is no one single answer to these questions, here are four things to keep in mind as you read Ezekiel.

1. God is not passive about evil. Mercy should not be mistaken for apathy. When we look at the evil in the world around us, we can feel both sorrow and anger. In this way, we reflect God's feelings about evil.
2. God does not totally abandon his people. Even when they are under judgment, he wants them to know he is still involved. It may seem odd, but even proclamations of judgment are a sign that God has not left his people alone.
3. Many readers have noted the extreme nature of the message of Ezekiel. One reason for this seems to be that a temptation of the God's people is not simply to disobey God, but simply to ignore God. God is passionate to be involved with his people, even when they have rebelled against him.
4. The final word of Ezekiel is not judgment, but hope for God's mercy. If you read the entire book, you will find that the horrors of the first part of the book are matched by a hope in the second part.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

EZEKIEL

VIDEOS

thebibleproject.com/explore/ezekiel

COMMENTARY

The Message of Ezekiel: A New Heart and a New Spirit by Christopher J. H. Wright

MARK

DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

Mark: Doubleday Bible Commentary by R.T. France

GROUP STUDY

Mark (N. T. Wright for Everyone Bible Study Guides) by N. T. Wright

“GOING DEEPER” COMMENTARY

Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus by Ched Meyers

WEEK 1

DAY 1 | EZEKIEL 1:1-21 (CHAPTERS 1-5 IF READING WHOLE BOOK)

Part of the nation of Israel is in exile in Babylon, and Ezekiel is among them. Because he was a priest, one would think he is out of a job, since the temple is in Jerusalem. However, in this inaugural vision, we see an image of God’s presence coming towards the exiles in Babylon. Have you ever felt far from God’s presence? How is it encouraging to know that God’s presence is mobile, and can be with us at times when we are struggling?

DAY 2 | MARK 1:1-15

The gospel of Mark begins with the repeated idea that Jesus’ message is good news. How has Jesus been good news in your life? Have there been times when Jesus didn’t feel like good news? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage. *If you want to go deeper, this passage is full of references to Old Testament texts. Look particularly at Isaiah 40 and 2 Kings 1, especially verse 8.*

DAY 3 | MARK 1:16-28

We start this reading with the call of the first disciples. How does this story compare to ways in which you may have felt called by Jesus? We also see spiritual resistance to Jesus. Have you ever experienced something that felt like spiritual resistance? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 4 | MARK 1:29-45

One theme we will see in Mark is that Jesus resists staying in one place to be famous and comfortable. Rather, he insists on following God’s call to new places. What ways in your life might God invite away from apathy or complacency into new challenges? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 5 | MARK 2:1-12

One theme of Jesus’ ministry is the importance of the forgiveness of sins. It seems to have surprised some that this was such a central part of Jesus’ ministry. What has forgiveness of sins meant for you—whether receiving forgiveness or extending it to others? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

WEEK 2

DAY 1 | EZEKIEL 3:4-15 (CHAPTERS 6-11)

Ezekiel is given a call, and told that it would be difficult. He is so overwhelmed that his response is bitterness, turmoil, and silence. What are some examples of difficult challenges you have faced? What might it mean to face those challenges as part of God’s call on your life? What would this make you want to say to God?

DAY 2 | MARK 2:13-22

Jesus rejects the tendency to divide the world into “good people” and “bad people”. This tendency runs deep in all of us. Who are the people you tend to label as “bad people?” Who do you think of as “good people?” Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 3 | MARK 2:23-28

Sabbath was a centerpoint of Jewish religion. In this passage Jesus teaches us the role of healthy religion, which is to help people find God. Unhealthy religion simply helps us find more religion. When have you experienced healthy and/or unhealthy religion? What was the result in your life, or others? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 4 | MARK 3:1-12

It is remarkably early in the story that the desire to kill Jesus comes to light. Jesus' kingdom upsets the applecart of human assumptions about life. If Jesus makes us comfortable, we probably misunderstand him. Reflect on this as you ponder this passage.

DAY 5 | MARK 3:14-19

Jesus didn't do ministry or life by himself. He wanted to be with friends, and to do what God called him to in community. Do you have friends to do life with? What names would be on your list? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

WEEK 3

DAY 1 | EZEKIEL 3:16-27 (CHAPTERS 12-15)

Ezekiel is not responsible for the response of people to his warning, he is only responsible to deliver God's word. Have you ever had to watch someone suffer the results of their own bad choices? How did you respond? Are there people in your life for whom you feel a sense of spiritual responsibility? What might you learn from this passage?

DAY 2 | MARK 3:20-35

Jesus encounters resistance and even betrayal from an early time in his ministry. Resistance and betrayal are normal parts of anyone's life, even more so for those who align with God's kingdom. Have you experienced resistance and betrayal? How have you reacted? What would it mean to expect these things as a normal part of life? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 3 | MARK 4:1-20

If we study both the Bible and church history, we find that lifelong faithfulness to God is unusual. Burnout and disillusionment are more common. Jesus here suggests that it is hearing the word of God, along with intimacy with Jesus that are keys to longevity. Does this seem true to you? What have you seen to be keys for long term faithfulness? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 4 | MARK 4:21-29

The coming of the kingdom of God has impact on people—both people who accept it, and people who don't. Sometimes these impacts are unexpected—things that had been kept secret. How has the kingdom of God impacted your life? What about those around you? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 5 | MARK 4:30-41

There are three themes in today's reading. First, the kingdom may start small, but it has big impact. Second, that the key to understanding the kingdom is to stay close to Jesus. Third, that true faith learns not to be afraid, even in storms. How do these themes connect to each other? How do they connect to your life? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

WEEK 4

DAY 1 | EZEKIEL 5:1-17 (CHAPTERS 16-20)

Ezekiel is given a call, and told that it would be difficult. He is so overwhelmed that his response is bitterness, turmoil, and silence. What are some examples of difficult challenges you have faced? What might it mean to face those challenges as part of God's call on your life? What would this make you want to say to God?

DAY 2 | MARK 5:1-20

This story is about Jesus overcoming overwhelming spiritual oppression. There is a double meaning in the text, as "legion" (see verse 9) was the name for a group of Roman troops who were oppressing the Jewish people. What overwhelming oppression are you aware of in both your own life and in the world around you? What would it mean for Jesus to overcome this oppression? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 3 | MARK 5:21-34

This story reminds us about the deep compassion of Jesus. Where in your life are you in need of healing and compassion? Do you believe that Jesus loves you and wants to care for you? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 4 | MARK 5:35-43

This story is about Jesus power over death, and it foreshadows that fact that in his resurrection, Jesus will overcome death. How have you experienced death? What happened? What feelings surrounded it? What do you want to say to Jesus about death, and about resurrection? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 5 | MARK 6:1-13

Jesus and his message can be accepted or rejected. Jesus does not force anyone to accept the message of the kingdom, but he encourages people to extend the invitation of the kingdom freely. What would it mean for you to say yes to Jesus today? What might it mean for you to offer the kingdom freely to others? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

WEEK 5

DAY 1 | EZEKIEL 10:1-22 (CHAPTERS 21-23)

This is a vision that Ezekiel, who is in Babylon, has of the temple in Jerusalem. Because of the sin of Israel, God's presence has abandoned the temple. Where did it go? Remember the vision in chapter 1 - God's presence has come to his people in exile in Babylon. When in your life has your heart felt the furthest from God? Can you imagine God's presence choosing to meet you in that place, like he met the Israelites in their exile?

DAY 2 | MARK 6:14-29

In life, it can seem like the stories that matter are those about people with wealth and fame. But the story of Mark 4 ends up being a minor part of the much larger story of Jesus. Are there people or situations that feel big and intimidating to you? What do you think Jesus thinks about them? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage. *Note: for those who like soap operas or telenovelas, I think this story would be the basis for a fantastic script. Just putting it out there.*

DAY 3 | MARK 6:30-44

There are two important themes in this passage. First, Jesus provides rest for his disciples (verse 31). Second, Jesus can provide for seemingly impossible needs (verse 42). These are both very good news in our busy, stressful lives. What do you need from Jesus? What things are causing you the most stress in life? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage

DAY 4 | MARK 6:45-56

The gospel of Mark is full of stories of Jesus doing miraculous things. Like the disciples, it can be hard for us to believe in supernatural things from Jesus (see verse 52). Who do you know that needs a miracle from God? How might you pray for that miracle? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 5 | MARK 7:1-13

The Bible is full of stories of religion gone bad - rituals and rules that don't honor God, and can actually become oppressive and dishonoring to God. What can we learn from this passage about how that happens? What would it mean to guard against this in our own church life? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

WEEK 6

DAY 1 | EZEKIEL 29:1-16 (CHAPTERS 24-28)

One of the sins of Israel was that they had been relying on Egypt's help instead of trusting God. In this chapter, we see God punish Egypt for two reasons: one, for pride, and two, as a lesson to the people of Israel. When have you seen pride be a destructive force? What happened? Have you ever had to learn from the suffering of others? Reflect on what happened.

DAY 2 | MARK 7:14-23

Jesus has no illusions about people. He loves people deeply, and he also knows that we all have a dark side (see verses 21-23). What are the dark parts of your inner heart? What would it mean to bring these painful things to Jesus? What do you think he would do if you brought them to him? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 3 | MARK 7:24-37

If we read verses 24-27, it seems at first that Jesus is prejudiced against non-Jews. However, we know from other passages that this is not the case. Many scholars think there is a bit of sarcasm and humor going on between Jesus and the Gentile woman. Does this seem possible to you? If not, how might we understand this passage? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 4 | MARK 7:14-23

The theme of this passage is Jesus being misunderstood by both his followers and his enemies. At times, we will not understand Jesus. And if we do the work of Jesus, we will at times be misunderstood. When has Jesus confused you? When have you felt misunderstood? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 5 | MARK 7:24-37

Notice a parallel between the two stories. The blind man gains sight, but gradually (see verses 24-25). Peter understands Jesus partially (v. 29) but not completely (v. 33). Jesus tells Peter that when he fully understands, he will be willing to give his whole life to Jesus (v. 36-37). Are you completely devoted to Jesus? Are there areas of your life you are holding back? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

WEEK 7

DAY 1 | EZEKIEL 30:1-19 (CHAPTERS 29-33)

There are four things to notice here. First, the punishment is against Egypt, not Israel. Second, notice the detail with which God and Ezekiel think about Egypt. Third, notice that in addition to judgment, there is also a note of mourning over the suffering of Egypt. Fourth, notice that the purpose of the judgment is ultimately that the people of Egypt might know the Lord. God's purposes and emotions in this situation are complex. What does this tell you about God? Have you ever experienced a mix of emotions like this - anger mixed with sadness? What happened? What does it mean to read about God in a similar situation?

DAY 2 | MARK 9:1-13

In this passage, some of disciples learn that there is more to Jesus than they realized. The experience is so powerful that they barely know what to say. Have you had powerful experiences of Jesus? Would you like to? Do you know others who have? What do you make of these experiences? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage. *Note: If you want to dig a little deeper here, read Malachi 4, and review Mark chapters 1 and 4. Note the parallels between the prediction of Elijah and the ministry of John.*

DAY 3 | MARK 9:14-29

This passage has two classic lines, one of which I find utterly relatable, and the other which I find utterly mysterious. The prayer of the Father in verse 24 feels like a prayer many of us could pray. The declaration of Jesus in verse 29 baffles me. What do you make of these two moments? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 4 | MARK 9:30-37

One way Bible teachers have talked about Jesus' ministry is with the phrase "the upside-down kingdom." That is, so often the way Jesus perceives the world is the opposite of the way ordinary people do. How do we see this upside down kingdom in today's reading? What might that mean for us in our lives? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 5 | MARK 9:38 - 10:12

This passage contains a number of sayings that are either difficult to understand, or might seem potentially offensive. It's important not to simply ignore difficult passages. What in this passage is meaningful to you? What is confusing or difficult? What would it mean to sit with these difficulties instead of skipping past them? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

WEEK 8

DAY 1 | EZEKIEL 33:10-20 (CHAPTERS 34-37)

God's judgment has purpose, and one of its main purposes is turning people to repentance. It seems that God's people seem to think they might be immune to God's judgment because of their religious history. But God wants their repentance now, not simply past obedience. What excuses do you sometimes make to avoid having to obey God? What ways might God be calling you to repent and turn to obedience in your life right now?

DAY 2 | MARK 10:13-31

One theme in this passage is the requirement of total commitment to the kingdom. One scholar says that while the command to sell all and give to the poor is not binding on all Christians, it is more likely to apply to those who are sure it does not apply to them. Are there things God is calling you to that you are resistant to? What do you want to say to Jesus about this? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 3 | MARK 10:32-45

The closer Jesus gets to the cross, the more often he tells his disciples that servanthood and suffering are to be an expected part of their discipleship. The disciples seem almost determined to avoid this idea. Why might the disciples not want to think about servanthood and suffering? Are there ways we would want to avoid these themes? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 4 | MARK 10:46-52

Even in the midst of his own difficulties, Jesus makes time for those who need him. Many people in the crowd seemed to think that Bartimaeus didn't deserve the attention of Jesus. Are there times you don't think Jesus wants to pay attention to you? How might this passage encourage you? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 5 | MARK 11:1-11

Even in the midst of his own difficulties, Jesus makes time for those who need him. Many people in the crowd seemed to think that Bartimaeus didn't deserve the attention of Jesus. Are there times you don't think Jesus wants to pay attention to you? How might this passage encourage you? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

WEEK 9

DAY 1 | EZEKIEL 34:11-24 (CHAPTERS 38-39)

This passage comes in the midst of a judgment against the evil leaders of Israel, whom Ezekiel calls "shepherds". The promise of God is that God himself will be a good shepherd. Ezekiel remembers back to David, the great king of Israel, who was a shepherd before he was king. The New Testament picks this language up when it calls Jesus "the Good Shepherd". Think of examples in your life of good leadership and bad leadership. How are they different? What impact do they have on those who follow? What would it mean to model our leadership after Jesus, a shepherd who truly cares for the sheep?

DAY 2 | MARK 11:12-25

There's a lot happening in this passage, and if you are interested in consulting some commentaries, you'll find a lot of interconnections with other scriptural themes. Let's focus on the verse 25. How does this verse connect to all that comes before it? What does it mean for our lives in prayer and community?

DAY 3 | MARK 11:27-12:12

In this passage we see how Jesus responds to opposition and pressure. Rather than running away, or trying to justify himself, he offers provocative questions and stories. His accusers find themselves both stumped (verse 33) and angry (verse 12). His confidence comes from his belief that God is the one at work in the situation (verse 11). When do you need more confidence and faith? What might it look like if you gained more faith? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 4 | MARK 12:13-17

To understand this story, you have to know that the Pharisees and the supporters of Herod would normally have been enemies. The Pharisees were loyal to Jewish religious interests, and the supporters of Herod were loyal to Roman political interests. Both hate Jesus because he refuses to be hijacked into someone else's religious or political agenda. What might that mean for the church today? How can we be like Jesus in our approach to both politics and religion? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 5 | MARK 12:18-34

In contrast to yesterday's reading, here we have Jesus involved in conversations with a more sincere audience. Three things emerge as key—knowing the scriptures, faith in the power of God, and the supremacy of love (see verse 24 and verses 30-31). What might these three priorities mean in your life? How can you grow in knowledge of the scriptures, in faith in God's power, and in love for God and others? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

WEEK 10

DAY 1 | EZEKIEL 37:1-14 (CHAPTERS 40-43)

This is one of the most famous passages in Ezekiel. It reminds us of a previous biblical text - the creation of humanity from dust in Genesis 1-2. It also reminds us of the resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament, and of our future resurrection from the dead. What experience have you had with the death of people you care about? Resurrection in this passage can be taken both literally and metaphorically. In what ways are you longing for resurrection power from God?

DAY 2 | MARK 12:35-44

Jesus is often contrasting perceptions with reality. Those who seem especially religious, or especially generous may not be so. And those who seem poor and lowly, like the widow in the story, may be much greater than we think. How might we misperceive others in these ways? How might we misperceive ourselves? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage. *Note: If you want to dig a little deeper, read Psalm 110, and puzzle over how Jesus is using that passage in his ongoing debate with the religious teachers.*

DAY 3 | MARK 13:1-20

We have here another example of the difference between perception and reality. To the disciples, the buildings of the temple are truly magnificent. Jesus begins to talk about mysterious realities much larger than the mere architecture of the temple. What things might seem overwhelming to us, but less important to Jesus? How can we learn to see things the way Jesus does? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 4 | MARK 13:21-37

One theme of the New Testament is that faith in Jesus is a faith both in what God is doing in the present, and in what God will do in the future, when Jesus comes again to establish the fullness of his kingdom. How do you imagine the future of God's kingdom? How might that future impact how we live together today? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 5 | MARK 14:1-16

We are entering some chapters of Mark in which so much is happening that we can barely keep up. Focus here on the story of the woman with the bottle of perfume. Let yourself enter into this story with your imagination. Where do you see yourself in this story? How do you want to carry it into the rest of your day? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage. *Note: If you want to dig a little deeper, read Exodus 12 and 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, and consider the significance of Passover in relation to this passage.*

WEEK 11

DAY 1 | EZEKIEL 47:1-12 (CHAPTERS 44-46)

In this final vision of Ezekiel, God shows a future in which the glory has returned to the temple, and blessing has returned to the people of Israel. Even the Dead Sea, which cannot support life, has become a place of fruitfulness. Contrast this vision of God's grace with the passages of judgment we have read earlier in the book. How do you fit these images together in your mind? What is an area of your life in which you would like to see God do a miraculous healing work?

DAY 2 | MARK 14:17-31

Consider that in this passage Jesus knows that he will be betrayed and abandoned by his closest friends. In the same moment, he offers to them the great gift of the Lord's Supper (sometimes called communion or Eucharist, see verses 22-24), as well as another promise about the future (verse 25). Jesus love for us is available even when we are at our weakest and most unfaithful. What does that mean to you today? How do you need to receive love and hope from Jesus? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 3 | MARK 14:32-52

This is perhaps the richest passage in the book of Mark. Rather than offer specific questions for reflection, I want to encourage you to read it meditatively and with imagination, asking Jesus to show you something about his love and power that is greater than you can imagine. *Note: There is a tradition that the young man in verses 51-52 is Mark, the author of this gospel. If so, it's a humorous moment in the midst of so much heaviness. God's word is full of unexpected, even playful, moments.*

DAY 4 | MARK 14:53-65

In this passage we see that Jesus is the victim of a rigged trial. The very court that was supposed to provide justice offered only lies and violence for Jesus. Our world is full of those who suffer innocently and unjustly. What does it mean that Jesus so identifies with those who suffer injustice? What does that mean to those of us who follow Jesus? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage. *Note: If you want to go a bit deeper, read Daniel 7, particularly verses 13-14, and think about how this connects to the dialogue in verses 61-62.*

DAY 5 | MARK 14:66-72

We are not supposed to read this passage in order to condemn Peter. Rather we are to see in Peter what we can be in our dark moments—afraid, self-centered, and defensive. Ponder that Jesus knew all this about Peter, and that he knows the worst of us, in the very moment when he is giving his life out of the deep love he has for us. J.I. Packer writes this in his book *Knowing God*: "There is tremendous relief in knowing His love to me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery can disillusion him about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself, and quench his determination to bless me."

WEEK 12

DAY 1 | REVELATION 22:1-6 (EZEKIEL CHAPTERS 47-48, CONSIDER ALSO READING REVELATION 21-22)

Compare this reading from the book of Revelation to last weeks reading from Ezekiel 47. What connections do you see? Notice that both Old and New Testaments hope for a day when God makes all things new. Why do you think the author of the book of Revelation picked up images from Ezekiel? Let your imagination wander. What would like be life on an earth where God's kingdom came in its perfect fullness?

DAY 2 | MARK 15:1-15

Pilate knows that Jesus is unjustly accused (verse 10). But he is more concerned with pleasing the crowd than doing what is right. Jesus is flogged and turned over to the enemies of the Jews, the Romans, because of the envy of the religious leaders, and the apathy of Pilate. Envy and apathy are ugly things, and temptations to all of us. Who do we feel envious of? When might we feel apathetic about evil? How might God want us to pray through these questions?

DAY 3 | MARK 15:16-32

Jesus dies alone, subject to public shaming. He is utterly vulnerable and unable to defend himself. The great irony of the passage is that the sign on the cross (verse 26) and the jeers of the crowd (verse 32) are true. This is the king of the Jews—showing his greatest power not by lording it over his people, but by suffering in their place. Where in your life have you known loneliness, shame, vulnerability, or betrayal? Where have you seen it in our world? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 4 | MARK 15:33-47

This is a passage full of glory and mystery. Let's focus on verse 39. Consider that this officer is not a Jew, but a Roman. He is not only an outsider, but an enemy to God's people. He has been part of the crucifixion—a demonstration of the power of Rome over Israel. And yet, something about the death of Jesus has transformed his heart in an instant. What does this mean? What happened to this officer? Reflect on these questions as you ponder this passage.

DAY 5 | MARK 16:1-8

Verse 8 is a wonderful, unexpected ending to the gospel of Mark. The women have seen something that is beyond anything they could have expected or understood. We must assume they are glad, but they are also overwhelmed. The resurrection of Jesus has opened a new epoch in human history. Sin has been confronted and death has been overwhelmed. Our lives now become the answer to the question - what happens next?