



EZEKIEL + MARK

A BIBLE READING WORKBOOK

WEEKS 1-4

**HEARING FROM GOD TOGETHER
THROUGH SCRIPTURE**

This guide will take you through 12 weeks of Bible reading. There are 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. One of the readings will be from the Old Testament book of Ezekiel. At the end of each reading, there will be a question or activity to help you think about what you read. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you use your imagination and thinking skills to understand what you read and how it makes you feel.

Because this is good practice for hearing from God while reading the Bible, we think it would be great if you finished the whole thing! Sometimes when you read, you might feel curious or excited or even sad or scared; sometimes, you might be bored. All of that's ok - you're building your "Listening to God" muscles. Talk to other kids or grown-ups about what you're thinking as we go - the whole church is in on this together!

READING THE BOOK OF MARK

The book of Mark is one of four biographies of Jesus found in the New Testament. As you read, think about what kind of person Jesus is. What did he do, what made him sad, what made him angry, who did he spend time with? Use your imagination as much as you can to think about what being with Jesus would be like. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you know Jesus.

READING THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

The book of Ezekiel is weird. God's people, called Israel, have been taken captive after being disobedient to God and worshipping idols. God chooses Ezekiel to speak to his people. He shows Ezekiel visions and asks him to do some strange things to remind his people that their sin makes God unhappy and will be punished. As you read, think about why God is spending so much time and energy trying to get Israel's attention. What is he trying to tell them?

READING MARK 1:16-28

When Jesus was walking by Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and Simon’s brother, Andrew. They were fishermen and were throwing a net into the lake to catch fish. Jesus said to them, “Come and follow me. I will make you fishermen for men.” So Simon and Andrew immediately left their nets and followed him.

Jesus continued walking by Lake Galilee. He saw two more brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in their boat, preparing their nets to catch fish. Their father Zebedee and the men who worked for him were in the boat with the brothers. When Jesus saw the brothers, he called them to come with him. They left their father and followed Jesus.

Jesus and his followers went to Capernaum. On the Sabbath day Jesus went to the synagogue and began to teach. The people there were amazed at his teaching. He did not teach like their teachers of the law. He taught like a person who had authority. While he was in the synagogue, a man was there who had an evil spirit in him. The man shouted, “Jesus of Nazareth! What do you want with us? Did you come to destroy us? I know who you are—God’s Holy One!”

Jesus said strongly, “Be quiet! Come out of the man!” The evil spirit made the man shake violently. Then the spirit gave a loud cry and came out of him.

The people were amazed. They asked each other, “What is happening here? This man is teaching something new. And he teaches with authority. He even gives commands to evil spirits, and they obey him.” And the news about Jesus spread quickly everywhere in the area of Galilee.

REFLECTION

In this reading, we see a few people say “yes” when Jesus calls them. Have you ever said “yes” to Jesus?

We also see how Jesus acts when something is not right. Do you notice what he says to the evil spirit? How do you think Jesus feels about evil?

Horizontal lines for reflection writing.

READING MARK 1:29-45

Jesus and his followers left the synagogue. They all went at once with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon’s mother-in-law was sick in bed with a fever. The people there told Jesus about her. So Jesus went to her bed, took her hand, and helped her up. Immediately the fever left her, and she was healed. Then she began serving them.

That night, after the sun went down, the people brought to Jesus all who were sick. They also brought those who had demons in them. The whole town gathered at the door of the house. Jesus healed many who had different kinds of sicknesses. He also forced many demons to leave people. But he would not allow the demons to speak, because they knew who he was.

Early the next morning, Jesus woke and left the house while it was still dark. He went to a place to be alone and pray. Later, Simon and his friends went to look for Jesus. They found him and said, “Everyone is looking for you!”

Jesus answered, “We should go somewhere else, to other towns around here. Then I can preach there too. That is the reason I came.” So he traveled everywhere in Galilee. He preached in the synagogues and forced demons to leave people.

A man who had a harmful skin disease came to Jesus. The man fell to his knees and begged Jesus, “I know that you can heal me if you will.”

Jesus felt sorry for the man. So he touched him and said, “I want to heal you. Be healed!” At once the disease left the man, and he was healed.

Jesus told the man to go at once. But Jesus warned him strongly, “Don’t tell anyone about what I did for you. But go and show yourself to the priest. And offer a gift to God because you have been healed. Offer the gift that Moses commanded. This will show the people that you are healed.” The man left there, but he told everyone he saw that Jesus had healed him. So the news about Jesus spread. That is the reason Jesus could not enter a town if people saw him. He stayed in places where nobody lived. But people came from all the towns to wherever he was.

REFLECTION

Jesus seems to be moving around a lot.

Why do you think he does that? Why do you think Jesus asked people NOT to tell others about what he had done?

Horizontal lines for reflection writing.

READING MARK 2:13-22

Jesus went to the lake again. A crowd followed him there, and he taught them. While he was walking beside the lake, he saw a tax collector named Levi son of Alphaeus. Levi was sitting in the tax office. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." And Levi stood up and followed Jesus.

Later that day, Jesus ate at Levi's house. There were many tax collectors and "sinners" eating there with Jesus and his followers. Many people like this followed Jesus. The teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw Jesus eating with the tax collectors and "sinners." They asked his followers, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus heard this and said to them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor. It is the sick who need a doctor. I did not come to invite good people. I came to invite sinners."

One day the followers of John and the Pharisees were giving up eating. Some people came to Jesus and said, "John's followers and the followers of the Pharisees give up eating. But your followers don't. Why?"

Jesus answered, "When there is a wedding, the friends of the bridegroom are not sad while he is with them. They do not give up eating while the bridegroom is still there. But the time will come when the bridegroom will leave them. Then the friends will be sad and will give up eating.

"When a person sews a patch over a hole on an old coat, he never uses a piece of cloth that is not yet shrunk. If he does, the patch will shrink and pull away from the coat. Then the hole will be worse. Also, no one ever pours new wine into old leather bags for holding wine. If he does, the new wine will break the bags, and the wine will be ruined along with the bags for the wine. People always put new wine into new leather bags."

REFLECTION

It seems like the Pharisees were unhappy that Jesus was hanging out with people they called "bad people."

What did Jesus think about those people? Are there any people you know who get treated like "bad people" in your classroom or neighborhood?

Horizontal lines for reflection writing.

READING EZEKIEL 3:16-27

For those wanting to read the entire book of Ezekiel, read chapters 12-15

After seven days the Lord spoke his word to me again. He said, "Human being, I have made you a watchman for Israel. Any time you hear a word from my mouth, warn them for me. When I say to an evil person, 'You will surely die,' you must warn him. If you don't speak out to warn the evil person to leave his evil way, he will die in his sin. But I will hold you responsible for his death. You must warn the evil person. Then if he does not turn from his wickedness or his evil ways, he will die because of his sin. But you will have saved yourself.

"Again, a person who does right may turn away from his goodness. He may do evil. If I caused him to sin, he will die. Because you have not warned him, he will die because of his sin. And the good he did will not be remembered. But I will hold you responsible for his death. But if you do warn that good person not to sin, he may not sin. Then he will surely live. This is because he was warned. And you will save yourself."

Then I felt the power of the Lord there. He said to me, "Get up and go out to the plain. There I will speak to you." So I got up and went out to the plain. I saw the glory of the Lord standing there. It was like the glory I saw by the Kebar River. And I bowed facedown on the ground.

Then the Spirit entered me and made me stand on my feet. He spoke to me and said, "Go, shut yourself up in your house. As for you, human being, the people will tie you up with ropes. They will tie you up, and you will not be able to go out among them. Also, I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth. Then you will be silent. And you will not be able to argue with the people, even though they turn against me. But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth. And you will say, 'The Lord God says this.' Whoever will listen, let him listen. Whoever refuses, let him refuse. They are a people who turn against me.

REFLECTION

It sounds like God knows that some people will listen to God and others will not. He doesn't say that this is Ezekiel's fault.

Have you ever had to watch someone suffer the results of their own bad choices? How did you respond? How do you think God feels about that?

Horizontal lines for reflection writing.

READING MARK 4:1-20

Another time Jesus began teaching by the lake. A great crowd gathered around him. So he got into a boat and went out on the lake. All the people stayed on the shore close to the water. Jesus used many stories to teach them. He said, "Listen! A farmer went out to plant his seed. While the farmer was planting, some seed fell by the road. The birds came and ate all that seed. Some seed fell on rocky ground where there wasn't much dirt. The seed grew very fast there because the ground was not deep. But when the sun rose, the plants withered. The plants died because they did not have deep roots. Some other seed fell among thorny weeds. The weeds grew and choked the good plants. So those plants did not make grain. Some other seed fell on good ground. In the good ground, the seed began to grow. It grew and made a crop of grain. Some plants made 30 times more grain, some 60 times more grain, and some 100 times more grain."

Then Jesus said, "Let those with ears use them and listen!"

Later, when Jesus was alone, the 12 apostles and others around him asked him about the stories.

Jesus said, "Only you can know the secret truth about the kingdom of God. But to other people I tell everything by using stories. I do this so that:

'They will look and look, but they will not learn.

They will listen and listen, but they will not understand.

If they did learn and understand,

they would come back to me and be forgiven."

Then Jesus said to the followers, "Do you understand this story? If you don't, then how will you understand any story? The farmer is like a person who plants God's teaching in people. Sometimes the teaching falls on the road. This is like some people. They hear the teaching of God. But Satan quickly comes and takes away the teaching that was planted in them. Others are like the seed planted on rocky ground. They hear the teaching and quickly accept it with joy. But they don't allow the teaching to go deep into their lives. They keep it only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the teaching, they quickly give up. Others are like the seed planted among the thorny weeds. They hear the teaching. But then other things come into their lives: worries, the love of money, and wanting all

kinds of other things. These things stop the teaching from growing. So that teaching does not produce fruit in their lives. Others are like the seed planted in the good ground. They hear the teaching and accept it. Then they grow and produce fruit—sometimes 30 times more, sometimes 60 times more, and sometimes 100 times more."

REFLECTION

Jesus tells a story about listening to God's teachings. Where do you hear God's teachings? What does it mean to accept God's teachings? Who can help you do that?

Horizontal lines for reflection writing.

READING EZEKIEL 5:1-17

For those wanting to read all of Ezekiel, read chapters 16-20

Now, human being, take a sharp sword. Use it like a barber’s razor to shave your head and beard. Then take scales and weigh and divide the hair. Burn one-third with fire when the days of the attack on Jerusalem are over. Burn it in the middle of the city. Then take one-third and cut it up with the knife all around the city. And scatter one-third to the wind. This is how I will chase them with a sword. Also take a few of these hairs and tie them in the folds of your clothes. Take a few more and throw them into the fire and burn them up. From there a fire will spread to all the people of Israel.

“This is what the Lord says: This is Jerusalem. I have put her at the center of the nations with countries all around her. But she has refused to obey my laws. She has been more evil than the nations. She has refused to obey my rules even more than those around her. The people of Jerusalem have rejected my laws and have not lived by my rules.

“So this is what the Lord God says: You caused more confusion than the nations around you. You did not follow my rules or obey my laws. You have not even obeyed the laws of the nations around you.

“So this is what the Lord God says: I myself am against you. I will punish you and the nations will watch. I will do things among you that I have not done before. I will never do anything like them again. I will do them because you do the things I hate. So fathers among you will eat their children. And children will eat their fathers. I will punish you. I will scatter to the winds all who are left alive. So the Lord God says: As surely as I live, you have made my Temple unclean. You have done it with all your evil idols and the hated things you do. Because of this I will cut you off. I will have no pity. I will show no mercy. A third of you will die by disease or be destroyed by hunger inside your walls. A third will fall dead by the sword outside your walls. And a third I will scatter in every direction. I will chase them with a sword. Then my anger will come to an end. I will use it up against them. Then I will be satisfied. Then they will know that I, the Lord God, have spoken. After I have carried out my anger against them, they will know how strongly I felt.

“I will make you a ruin. And I will make you a shame among the nations around you. All who pass by will see this. Then you will be shamed by the nations around you. They will make fun of you. You will be a warning

to them. They will be terrified. This will happen when I punish you in my great anger. I, the Lord, have spoken. I will send a time of hunger to destroy you. Then I will make your hunger get even worse. I will cut off your supply of food. I will send a time of hunger and wild animals against you. They will kill your children. Disease and death will sweep through your people. I will bring the sword against you to kill you. I, the Lord, have spoken.”

God calls Ezekiel to something like street theater, or an act of performance art. The message is one of dire judgment. Jerusalem had been called by God to be a sign of God’s love and holiness to the nations. Instead, Israel has been more wicked than other nations, and God is going to discipline Jerusalem as a sign of judgment.

REFLECTION

Towards the end of the book of Ezekiel, we will find out that God also has a heart of mercy for his people. But before then, we hear a lot about how God gets angry and judges wickedness.

Can you think of anything going on today that makes you angry? Why does it make you angry? How do you think God feels?

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