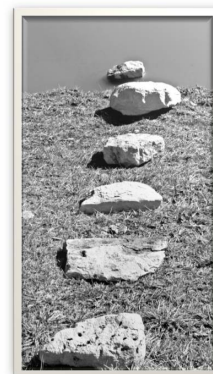


# Take The Next Step

## Mark 3-4



*"Consider carefully what you hear." Mark 4:24 NIV*

*"Listen carefully to what I am saying." Mark 4:24 The Message*

### Truth to Stand On

The truth of God's Word demands a response. God calls us not just to hear, but to believe.

### Opening Prayer

Dear God, Give us ears to hear the truth of your Word. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, increase our faith and produce fruit in our lives. In Jesus, Name, Amen

### Getting in Step With Your Group

Introduce yourselves if there are any new group members. Ask for volunteers to share examples of claims they've heard that are too good to be true.

### Step by Step Through Mark 3-4

Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6) and the truth demands a response. In these two chapters of Mark, we see a variety of responses to the truth of Jesus and His Word. Read through Mark 3-4 together, noting these steps along the way:

- Step 1: The Pharisees are out to kill the Truth that conflicts with their tradition – Mark 3:1-6
- Step 2: The crowds run after the Truth, seeking help and healing – Mark 3:7-10
- Step 3: Evil spirits point out the Truth, Jesus, the Son of God – Mark 3:11-12
- Step 4: Jesus calls apostles to spread the truth – Mark 3:13-19
- Step 5: Jesus' own family questions His truth – Mark 3:20-21
- Step 6: Teachers of the law deny His truth and attribute His power to demons – Mark 3:22-30
- Step 7: Jesus declares His true family to be those who do His will – Mark 3:31-35
- Step 8: Jesus describes various responses to the truth in a parable – Mark 4:1-20
- Step 9: Jesus calls us to hear the truth – Mark 4:21-25
- Step 10: Jesus teaches truths of the kingdom in parables – Mark 4:26-33
- Step 11: Jesus displays the power of the Truth, even over nature – Mark 4:35-41

In Mark 3, we see some different reactions to Jesus. What is Jesus' response when...

- ...the Pharisees try to trap Him in their laws? (3:1-6)
- ...the crowds run after Him for help? (3:7-10, 13-19)
- ...the demons announce His true identity? (3:11-12)
- ...His family thinks He is out of His mind? (3:20-21, 31-34)
- ...the teachers of the law accuse Him of being possessed by demons? (3:22-30)

In Mark 3, who seems to be most threatened by the truth? Why do you think this is so?

In Mark 3:29, Jesus refers to the eternal sin. What is this unforgivable sin? Why can God not forgive this sin? In The Message, Eugene Peterson paraphrases this sin as "sawing off the branch on which you're sitting." How is this an apt description of this sin?

Look back at the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4:1-20. What are the four kinds of soil and what do they stand for? Try to put the explanations in your own words, using examples from today's world.

Which Old Testament prophet does Jesus quote in Mark 4:12 to describe those who refuse to listen? How does this show that turning a deaf ear to God is nothing new?

What do you think Mark 4:21-22 teaches about the truth?

In Mark 4:25, Jesus says that whoever has will be given more, and whoever does not have will lose even what he has. What do you think Jesus is referring to?

What do the two parables in Mark 4:26-32 teach about the power of God's truth?

In Mark 4:35-41, the disciples fear for their lives even though they are in the presence of Jesus. What about the situation makes them afraid? Are there emotions based more on their human assessment of the situation or what they know to be true about Jesus?

### Stepping into Our World

In this passage, Jesus calls us to "consider carefully" what we hear. Apply the truth you have just heard in Mark 3-4 by answering the questions below in your group as time permits:

- The Pharisees let their traditions get in the way of seeing the truth and doing good? What are some examples of ways we let our traditions or habits get in the way of what is true and right?
- When Jesus was overwhelmed by the crowds, He called the apostles to help meet their needs. What needs do you see around you and how can God use you this week to meet them?
- Jesus called us His brothers and sisters. What does it mean to you to have Jesus as a brother?
- Jesus taught that a house divided against itself cannot stand. What can you do to keep your church from being divided against itself?
- Considering the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-20), what kind of ground do you see yourself as? What kind of fruit is the kingdom producing in your life?
- Does Jesus seem to be sleeping through a "storm" in your personal life right now? How do you know He is still there with you and has power over your storm?

### Taking the Next Step

Take today's study of Mark 3-4 into the week ahead by choosing one of the following challenges

- Find a need in the "crowd" around you and let God use you to meet it.
- Take a small step to build up your church rather than divide it. Speak words of encouragement to a staff member or volunteer. Look for an area that needs your help (there are always many!) and offer your time and abilities.
- Ask God to pull out the "thorns" that are choking out his Word in your life. Take any actions necessary to weed your soil so that God's Word has room to take root.
- As you read the next two chapters of Mark this week, take time to carefully consider what you are reading. Ask God's Spirit to show you what specific truth He wants you to hear.
- Share a Scripture verse with someone who needs it, knowing that the Word has power.

### Closing Prayer

Give group members an opportunity to share prayer requests for the coming week.