

# A Day in the Ministry of Jesus



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Mark 1:16–45, John 1:29–42, Mark 5:41, Luke 6:12, Leviticus 13.*

**Memory Text:** “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men’ ” (*Mark 1:17, NKJV*).

Each Gospel introduces the beginning of Jesus' ministry in a particular way. Matthew presents Jesus as calling disciples and then preaching the Sermon on the Mount.

Luke tells the story of Jesus' inaugural sermon on a Sabbath in the synagogue in Nazareth.

John recounts the calling of some of the early disciples and the wedding at Cana, where Jesus performs His first *sign*.

The Gospel of Mark recounts the calling of four disciples and describes a Sabbath in Capernaum and what followed.

This “Sabbath with Jesus” at the beginning of Mark gives the reader a sense of who Jesus is. In the entire section for this week's lesson, there are very few of His words recorded: a brief call to discipleship, a command to a demon, a plan to visit other locations, and the healing of a leper with instructions to show himself before a priest to be clean. The emphasis is on action, particularly healing people. The Gospel writer likes to use the word *immediately* to illustrate the fast-action movement of Jesus' ministry.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 13.

## “Follow Me”

**Read** Mark 1:16–20. Who were the men Jesus called as disciples, and what was their response?

---

---

Mark 1 does not have many of Jesus’ words recorded. However, Mark 1:17 does have His words to two fishermen, Simon, who will later be called “Peter,” and his brother, Andrew. The two men are standing on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, casting a net.

There is no mention of a boat or other fishing paraphernalia, which may suggest that the two men are not well off financially. In Mark 1:19, 20, James and John are in a boat with their father and servants, which suggests that they were better off financially than Peter and Andrew. Luke indicates that Peter does have a boat and that, in fact, James and John were partners of Peter and Andrew (*see Luke 5:1–11*). But the Gospel of Mark may be presenting a contrast between the two sets of brothers, and in order to illustrate that difference, Jesus calls to discipleship both those who have less resources and those with more.

Jesus’ call to these men is simple, direct, and prophetic. He calls them to follow Him—that is, to become His disciples. He indicates that if they will respond to His call, He will take on the task of making them fishers of men.

**Ponder** why these men would immediately (*Mark 1:16–20*) leave everything and follow Jesus.

---

---

The Gospel of John fills in the picture more fully (*see John 1:29–42*). It seems that the brothers were followers of John the Baptist and heard his proclamation that Jesus was “ ‘the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ ” (*John 1:29, ESV*). They met Jesus and spent time with Him near the Jordan River. Consequently, their acceptance of Jesus’ call to ministry was not some lark or escapade. They had thought this through.

But why does Mark not fill in more details? Likely, it is to emphasize the power of Jesus. He calls, and willing fishermen answer, and their lives, and the world itself, are never the same.

**What have you been called to give up in order to follow Jesus? (Think about the implications of your answer, especially if you can’t think of anything.)**

## An Unforgettable Worship Service

**Read** Mark 1:21–28. What unforgettable experience happened in the Capernaum synagogue, and what spiritual truths can we take from this account?

---



---

Most Christians have some unforgettable moments in their Christian walk—the decision to follow Jesus; the day of their baptism; a powerful sermon during which they deeply felt the presence of God. Some of these moments might not only be unforgettable but be life-changing, as well.

So it might have been for some people in Capernaum on the Sabbath described in Mark 1. “And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (*Mark 1:22, NKJV*). As Jesus was teaching, a demon-possessed man, no doubt impacted by the power of Jesus’ teaching, shouted, “ ‘What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God’ ” (*Mark 1:24, ESV*), and Jesus cast out the demon.

Think of the implications of these words from the demon.

First, the demon recognizes Jesus as “ ‘the Holy One of God.’ ” He acknowledges that Jesus is the holy emissary of God, in contrast to the unclean, unholy hosts of Satan. In a worship setting, one expects holy things and individuals, not unholy and unclean things. Thus, in this story there is a sharp contrast between the forces of good and the forces of evil. We can see here the reality of the great controversy. People might not yet know who Jesus is, but the demon certainly does and publicly acknowledges it, as well.

Next, the command to come out of the man is understandable, but why the command, “ ‘Be quiet’ ” (*NKJV*)? Beginning here in Mark, a remarkable motif appears: Jesus’ call for silence regarding who He is. Scholars call this the “Messianic Secret.”

Jesus’ call for silence makes good sense because of the political overtones of Messianic expectations in His time. It was risky to be a messiah. Yet, mixed with the calls for silence are the unmistakable revelations of who Jesus is. What will become clear over time is that Jesus’ identity cannot be hidden, and the truth of who He is becomes the center of the gospel message. People need not only to know who Jesus is but then to make a decision about how they will respond to His coming and what it means for them.

**In seeking to witness to others, when might it be prudent not to present all that we believe regarding “present truth”?**

## More Sabbath Ministry

**Read** Mark 1:29–34. How did Jesus help Peter’s family, and what spiritual lessons can we draw from this account?

---



---



---

After the amazing synagogue service, Jesus retires with His small band of disciples (Peter, Andrew, James, and John) to Peter’s home, evidently to spend the rest of the Sabbath day in a friendly meal and fellowship.

But a note of concern overspreads the scene: Peter’s mother-in-law is ill with a fever, which back then meant you either got better or died. They tell Jesus of the sickness, and He takes Peter’s mother-in-law by the hand and raises her up. She immediately begins to serve their needs. What a powerful example of the principle that those who have been saved, healed, by Jesus will minister to others as a result!

Throughout Mark it is often the case that Jesus heals by touching the affected person (*see Mark 1:41; Mark 5:41*), though other times no touch is mentioned (*see Mark 2:1–12, Mark 3:1–6, Mark 5:7–13*).

Jesus was not done with ministry that day. After sunset many came to Peter’s house for healing, no doubt from seeing what happened at the synagogue that day or from hearing about it. The fact that the Gospel writer does not tell his readers that people delayed because of the hours of the Sabbath indicates that he expected his readers to know about the Sabbath. This feature of Mark is consistent with his readers being Sabbath keepers.

Mark says that the entire city was gathered at the door that evening (*Mark 1:33*). It would have taken some time for Jesus to help all those people.

“Hour after hour they came and went; for none could know whether tomorrow would find the Healer still among them. Never before had Capernaum witnessed a day like this. The air was filled with the voice of triumph and shouts of deliverance. The Saviour was joyful in the joy He had awakened. As He witnessed the sufferings of those who had come to Him, His heart was stirred with sympathy, and He rejoiced in His power to restore them to health and happiness.

“Not until the last sufferer had been relieved did Jesus cease His work. It was far into the night when the multitude departed, and silence settled down upon the home of Simon. The long, exciting day was past, and Jesus sought rest. But while the city was still wrapped in slumber, the Saviour, ‘rising up a great while before day, . . . went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.’”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 259.

## The Secret of Jesus' Ministry

**Read** Mark 1:35–39. What important lessons can be taken from what Jesus did here?

---

---

---

Jesus arose before sunrise and went out to a quiet, deserted location to pray. Mark 1:35 emphasizes prayer as the focus of Jesus' action. All the other verbal forms in the sentence are in summary form—He got up, went out, and departed (all in the aorist tense in Greek, signifying completeness). But the verb “to pray” is in the imperfect tense, a form used to express, particularly here, an ongoing process. *He was praying, He kept on praying.* The text also emphasizes how early it was when Jesus went out, implying that His time of prayer alone was extensive.

Throughout the Gospels, we meet Jesus as a man of prayer (*see Matt. 14:23, Mark 6:46, John 17*). This appears to be one of the key secrets in the power of Jesus' ministry.

**Read** Luke 6:12. What does this teach about Jesus' prayer life?

---

---

---

Many Christians have set times for prayer. This practice is good and right, but it also can become a routine, almost something done by rote. One way to break out of a set mold is to change the time of prayer occasionally or to pray longer than usual at times. The point is not to lock yourself into some kind of formula that can never change.

Peter and his companions did not accompany Jesus to the place of prayer. Perhaps they knew of the location because they did find Him. Their note that everyone was looking for Jesus suggested that He followed up the exciting experience of the previous day with more healing and teaching. Surprisingly, Jesus demurs and points to a wider field of service to other locations. “But He said to them, ‘Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth’ ” (*Mark 1:38, NKJV*).

**If Jesus Himself needed to spend so much time in prayer, what about ourselves, and how much time should we spend in prayer? What does Jesus' example say to us?**

## Can You Keep a Secret?

**Read Mark 1:40–45. What does this teach us about Jesus and how He related to the marginalized in society?**

---

---

Leprosy as described in this passage, and throughout the Old Testament as well, did not refer only to what is known today as Hansen's disease (bona fide leprosy). The biblical terminology would be better translated as a "dreaded skin disease" and could include other epidermic ailments, as well. Hansen's disease may have come to the ancient Near East about the third century B.C. (see David P. Wright and Richard N. Jones, "Leprosy," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4 [New York: Doubleday, 1992], pp. 277–282). Hence, the leper referred to in this passage could well have had Hansen's disease, though we don't know for sure exactly what the man suffered from, only that it was bad.

The leper places faith in Jesus that He can cleanse him. According to Leviticus 13, a leper was ritually unclean and had to avoid contact with others (see *Lev. 13:45, 46*).

Jesus, however, is moved with compassion toward the man and touches him. "Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed' " (*Mark 1:41, NKJV*). This action should have defiled Jesus until the evening, when He would be required to bathe to become ritually pure again (*compare with Leviticus 13–15*). But Mark is clear that Jesus' action of touching the sick man cleanses him of his leprosy. Thus, Jesus was not defiled by touching the man.

Jesus sends the man to a priest with the instruction to offer the sacrifice Moses commanded for such cases in Leviticus 14. Throughout the Gospel of Mark, Jesus stands as a defender and supporter of what Moses taught (see *Mark 7:10; Mark 10:3, 4; Mark 12:26, 29–31*). This view stands in sharp contrast to the religious leaders, who in the passages in Mark 7, 10, and 12 are subverting the original intent of the teachings given through Moses. These details explain Jesus' command in Mark 1:44 to silence the man. If he were to tell of his cure by Jesus, it might prejudice the decision of the priest in bias against Jesus.

But the cleansed leper does not seem to understand this, and in disobedience to Jesus' command, he spreads the news far and wide, making it impossible for Jesus to enter towns openly for His ministry.

**How can we be careful not to do things that could hamper the spread of the gospel, no matter how good our intentions?**

**Further Thought:** Read Ellen G. White, “At Capernaum,” pp. 252–261; “Thou Canst Make Me Clean,” pp. 262–266, in *The Desire of Ages*.

What picture of Jesus does Mark 1 present? Jesus has authority to call disciples, and they respond. He is holy in contrast to unclean spirits under Satan. A great battle is going on between good and evil, and Jesus has more power than the demons. Jesus has compassion for sick people and helps them, touching them when perhaps no one else would.

“Jesus in the synagogue spoke of the kingdom He had come to establish, and of His mission to set free the captives of Satan. He was interrupted by a shriek of terror. A madman rushed forward from among the people, crying out, ‘Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art; the Holy One of God.’

“All was now confusion and alarm. The attention of the people was diverted from Christ, and His words were unheeded. This was Satan’s purpose in leading his victim to the synagogue. But Jesus rebuked the demon, saying, ‘Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.’ . . . He who had conquered Satan in the wilderness of temptation was again brought face to face with His enemy. The demon exerted all his power to retain control of his victim. To lose ground here would be to give Jesus a victory. . . . But the Saviour spoke with authority, and set the captive free.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 255, 256.

Meanwhile, our Lord carried on a busy ministry, moving from place to place, almost constantly in touch with many people. How did He maintain a calm and steady approach to ministry and people? It was doubtless through His daily experience of prayer.

Think about what might be a workable schedule for you in regard to time for prayer and study of the Scriptures. Find what works for you, and take that time to develop a peaceful spirit, guided by the Spirit and the Word of God.

## Discussion Questions:

- ① Talk in class about the question of prayer and why it is so important in the Christian life. What are some of the questions people have about the purpose and efficacy of prayer?
- ② In class, talk about cases in which it might be best, at certain times, not to say too much about our faith. When might that be the prudent thing to do, and yet, how can we do that without compromising our witness?
- ③ Who are the “lepers” in your culture today? How could your church reach out and “touch” these individuals to bring the gospel to them?

## Bewildered Shaman, Part 2

By ANDREW McCHESNEY

Father rested for several days at the house of his daughter, Divya, in Nepal. He was exhausted from his jobs as construction worker and shaman.

Father watched with interest when the Seventh-day Adventist pastor of Divya's church came to visit and brought several church members with him. He listened as they sang several songs about his daughter's new God, Jesus.

Then the pastor opened a Bible and read Jesus' invitation, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (*Matt. 11:28, NKJV*). Father felt a yearning in his heart to know this God. He wanted rest. Then the pastor read John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Father's heart was touched. He had never heard of a God who had given His only Son to save humanity. He realized that there was no need for animal sacrifices because God sent His Son as the ultimate sacrifice for all time.

After the pastor left, Father asked Divya for a Bible. He wanted to read those two verses for himself. But when he looked, he couldn't find them. Divya also couldn't find them, so she called the pastor. He showed how to find the verses. Father was delighted, and he began to read the Bible daily. On Sabbath, he went to church with Divya and his wife, who had been cured of her mysterious illness after Divya prayed. Father didn't understand anything at church or in the Bible. But he took the Bible when he left Mother with Divya and returned home to a neighboring town a short time later.

At home, he resumed work as a shaman and construction worker during the day. At night, he read the Bible. As the months passed, his desire to worship spirits vanished. He decided to leave the shaman profession.

"My life is different," he told the townspeople. "I don't want to do these rituals."

The townspeople were furious when they learned that Father had become a Christian. They accused him of betraying his ancestors. Father didn't mind. He was sure that he had found the one and only God.

Today, Father and Mother are active Seventh-day Adventists. Father, whose full name is Krishna Lama, is 66 years old and a deacon.



"I used to think that my home was where my ancestors lived," he said. "But now I feel like the church is my home. With Jesus, my future is bright."

*This mission story illustrates Mission Objective No. 2 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan, "To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach . . . among unreached and under-reached people groups." For more information, go to the website: [IWillGo2020.org](http://IWillGo2020.org).*