

saint mary's press

LIVE JESUS IN OUR HEARTS

**JESUS CHRIST**  
**AND**  
**THE NEW**  
**TESTAMENT**

ALAN J. TALLEY

LIVE JESUS IN OUR HEARTS

# JESUS CHRIST AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

High School Framework Course 2

ALAN J. TALLEY



saint mary's press

# Thanks and Dedication

A very special thank you to our student contributors: Viva from Cotter High School in Winona, MN; Casey and Ifeoluwa, both from Mater Dei High School in Santa Ana, CA; Matt from Providence Catholic High School in New Lenox, IL; and Vincent from De La Salle Collegiate High School in Warren, MI.

---

The Subcommittee on the Catechism, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has found that this catechetical high school text, copyright 2019, is in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and that it fulfills the requirements of Core Course II of the *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*.

Nihil Obstat: Dr. John Martens, PhD  
Censor Librorum  
November 15, 2018

Imprimatur: † Most Rev. Bernard A. Hebda  
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis  
November 20, 2018

The nihil obstat and imprimatur are official declarations that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those who have granted the nihil obstat or imprimatur agree with the contents, opinions, or statements expressed, nor do they assume any legal responsibility associated with publication.

The content in this resource was acquired, developed, and reviewed by the content engagement team at Saint Mary's Press. Content design and manufacturing were coordinated by the passionate team of creatives at Saint Mary's Press.

Cover image © Markus Pfaff / Shutterstock.com

Copyright © 2019 by Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320, [www.smp.org](http://www.smp.org). All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any means without the written permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

1166INT

ISBN 978-1-59982-996-8

# CONTENTS

UNIT 1: Jesus and Faith .....	8
CHAPTER 1: Getting to Know Jesus .....	10
<b>Article 1: Discovering Jesus: The Adventure Begins</b> .....	11
<b>Article 2: The Life and Times of Jesus</b> .....	15
<b>Article 3: The Gospel of Mark, Part 1: The Human Face of God</b> .....	20
<b>Article 4: The Gospel of Mark, Part 2: Who Do You Say That I Am?</b> .....	24
<b>Article 5: The Gospel of Mark, Part 3: The Empty Tomb Changes Everything</b> ...	28
CHAPTER 2: Jesus Revealed .....	36
<b>Article 6: How the Gospels Came to Be</b> .....	37
<b>Article 7: Four Gospels, Four Authors, Four Viewpoints</b> .....	42
<b>Article 8: The Synoptics: Similar but Not the Same</b> .....	47
<b>Article 9: Scripture and Tradition: Why We Need Both</b> .....	51
<b>Article 10: The Magisterium: Passing On God’s Revelation</b> .....	54
CHAPTER 3: The Two Natures of Jesus .....	60
<b>Article 11: True Man</b> .....	61
<b>Article 12: True God</b> .....	66
<b>Article 13: True God and True Man</b> .....	70
<b>Article 14: Why Does the Incarnation Matter?</b> .....	74
CHAPTER 4: It Comes Down to Faith .....	78
<b>Article 15: The Gift of Faith</b> .....	79
<b>Article 16: Learning about Faith from Paul’s Letters</b> .....	83
<b>Article 17: Galatians and Ephesians: Faith and Unity</b> .....	86
<b>Article 18: First Corinthians: Faith Overcomes Division</b> .....	91
<b>Article 19: We Celebrate Our Faith in Community</b> .....	95

UNIT 2: Exploring Jesus' Divinity .....	Page 108
CHAPTER 5: The Gospel of John: The Book of Signs .....	Page 110
<b>Article 20: The Gospel of John: Not a Synoptic</b> .....	Page 111
<b>Article 21: The Gospel of John: The Book of Signs</b> .....	Page 115
<b>Article 22: Revealing Jesus' Divine Nature</b> .....	Page 120
<b>Article 23: The Power of "I AM"</b> .....	Page 123
CHAPTER 6: The Gospel of John: The Book of Glory .....	Page 130
<b>Article 24: Jesus' Final Evening with His Disciples</b> .....	Page 131
<b>Article 25: Jesus' Suffering and Death Reveal His Divine Dignity</b> .....	Page 136
<b>Article 26: The Divine Son Returns</b> .....	Page 141
CHAPTER 7: The New Testament Letters Explore the Incarnation .....	Page 148
<b>Article 27: Philippians: Christ Empties Himself</b> .....	Page 149
<b>Article 28: Colossians: Beware of False Teachings</b> .....	Page 154
<b>Article 29: Hebrews: Our Divine High Priest</b> .....	Page 159

UNIT 3: Jesus Reveals the True God .....	Page 172
CHAPTER 8: Jesus Reveals God's Mercy and Justice .....	Page 174
<b>Article 30: Luke: The Gospel of God's Mercy</b> .....	Page 175
<b>Article 31: Luke: The Gospel of God's Justice</b> .....	Page 181
<b>Article 32: Mary's Incredible Role in God's Plan</b> .....	Page 186
<b>Article 33: God's Just and Merciful Plan</b> .....	Page 191
CHAPTER 9: Jesus Reveals God as Trinity .....	Page 198
<b>Article 34: God: The One and Only</b> .....	Page 199
<b>Article 35: Trinity: The Central Christian Mystery</b> .....	Page 205
<b>Article 36: The Distinctiveness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit</b> .....	Page 209
CHAPTER 10: The Church Teaches and Safeguards the Truth .....	Page 218
<b>Article 37: The Early Church Faces Challenges to Apostolic Faith</b> .....	Page 219
<b>Article 38: Early Heresies about Jesus</b> .....	Page 222
<b>Article 39: The Ecumenical Councils of the Early Church</b> .....	Page 227
<b>Article 40: The Nicene Creed</b> .....	Page 230
<b>Article 41: The Trinity: Model for Human Relationships</b> .....	Page 235

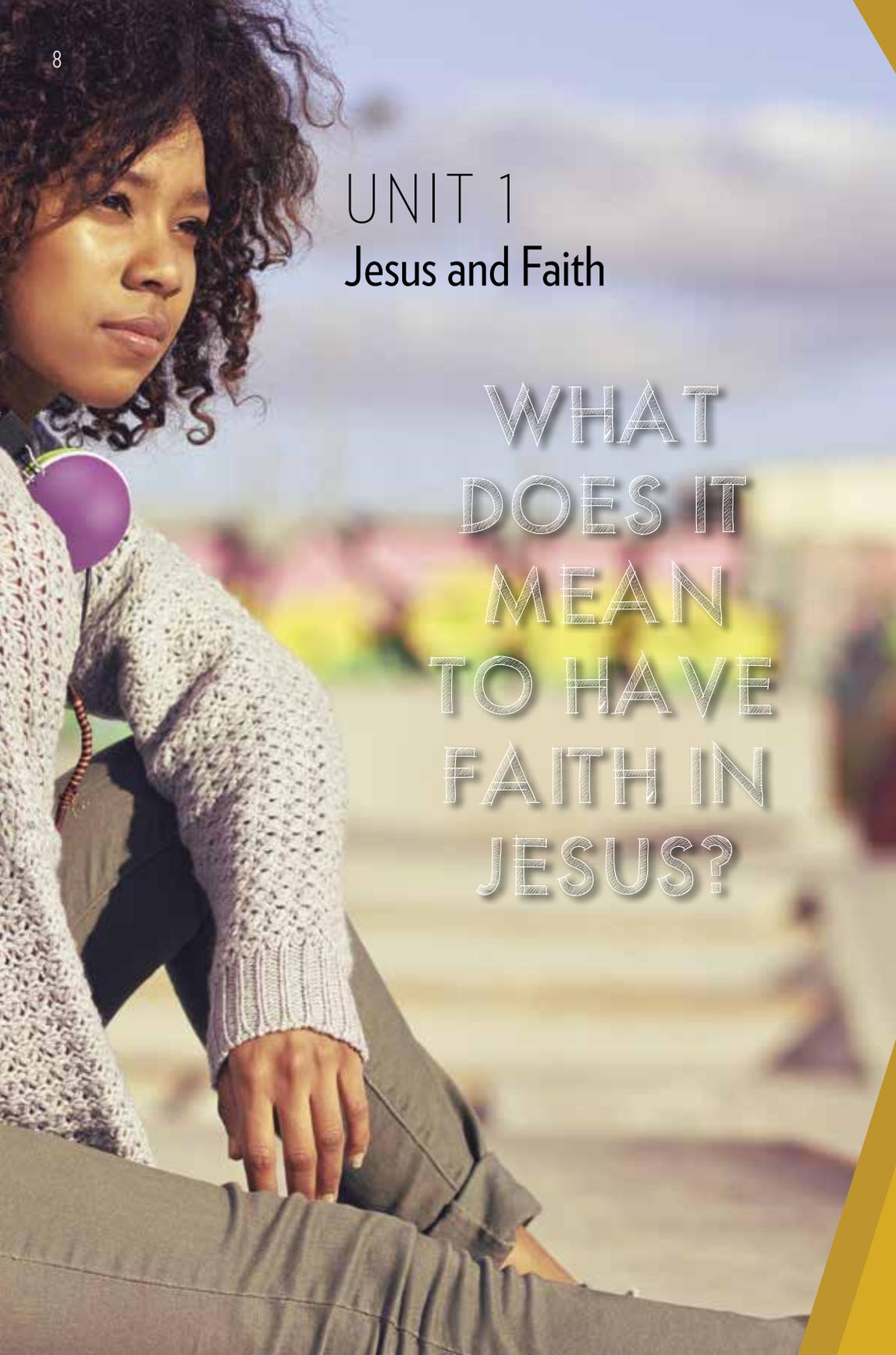
UNIT 4: Jesus and the Early Church.....	Page 246
CHAPTER 11: Acts of the Apostles: The Church Spread throughout the World ..	Page 248
<b>Article 42: Pentecost: The Church’s Public Beginning</b> .....	Page 249
<b>Article 43: The First Christians</b> .....	Page 254
<b>Article 44: Welcoming the Gentiles</b> .....	Page 258
<b>Article 45: The Church Spreads throughout the World</b> .....	Page 263
CHAPTER 12: The Early Church Responds to Challenges .....	Page 270
<b>Article 46: The Pastoral Letters: Responsibilities         of the Church Leaders</b> .....	Page 271
<b>Article 47: Letter of James: Living the Values of Jesus</b> .....	Page 277
<b>Article 48: Letter to Philemon: A Case Study         in Confronting Social Injustice</b> .....	Page 282
CHAPTER 13: Revelation: Christ’s Ultimate Triumph .....	Page 288
<b>Article 49: Letters to the Seven Churches</b> .....	Page 289
<b>Article 50: Signs and Symbols</b> .....	Page 294
<b>Article 51: An Overview of Revelation</b> .....	Page 298
<b>Article 52: Four Last Things</b> .....	Page 302
<b>Article 53: Faith: Our Response to Revelation</b> .....	Page 307

UNIT 5: Following Jesus .....	Page 318
CHAPTER 14: Our Call to Holiness .....	Page 320
<b>Article 54: Letters of John Living in Union with God</b> .....	Page 321
<b>Article 55: Jesus and Prayer</b> .....	Page 325
<b>Article 56: Growing in Prayer</b> .....	Page 329
<b>Article 57: The Theological Virtues</b> .....	Page 333
CHAPTER 15: Our Call to Serve .....	Page 338
<b>Article 58: Paul Models Committed Service</b> .....	Page 339
<b>Article 59: Serving Others: A Requirement or Nice to Do?</b> .....	Page 344
<b>Article 60: Concern for the Common Good</b> .....	Page 347
<b>Article 61: Young Saints Serving Others</b> .....	Page 353
CHAPTER 16: Our Call to Witness .....	Page 358
<b>Article 62: First Peter: Give Witness to Your Faith</b> .....	Page 359
<b>Article 63: Living Morally: Excerpts from Paul's Letters</b> .....	Page 362
<b>Article 64: The Apostles: Models of Witness</b> .....	Page 365
<b>Article 65: A Great Cloud of Witnesses</b> .....	Page 370
<b>Article 66: The Call to Evangelization</b> .....	Page 376
APPENDIX: Challenge Questions .....	Page 388
GLOSSARY .....	Page 395
INDEX .....	Page 404
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	Page 414

# UNIT 1

## Jesus and Faith

WHAT  
DOES IT  
MEAN  
TO HAVE  
FAITH IN  
JESUS?



# LOOKING AHEAD

CHAPTER 1 Page 10  
Getting to Know Jesus

CHAPTER 2 Page 36  
Jesus Revealed

CHAPTER 3 Page 60  
The Two Natures of Jesus

CHAPTER 4 Page 78  
It Comes Down to Faith

To be honest, I don't agree with some of the Church teachings, but I do still believe in God because I see proof of God's love for us everywhere. Whenever I see a gorgeous sunset or the beautiful bluffs that surround my town, I see God's power reflected. Anytime I am around others who are happy, loving, generous people, I recognize the love of Jesus through them.

**VIVA**  
Cotter High School



# CHAPTER 1

## Getting to Know Jesus

### WHO IS JESUS?

#### SNAPSHOT

##### Article 1 Page 11

##### Discovering Jesus: The Adventure Begins

- Pre-read: Acts of the Apostles 7:54–8:3, 9:1–22

##### Article 2 Page 15

##### The Life and Times of Jesus

##### Article 3 Page 20

##### The Gospel of Mark, Part 1:

##### The Human Face of God

- Pre-read: Mark, chapters 1–7

##### Article 4 Page 24

##### The Gospel of Mark, Part 2:

##### Who Do You Say That I Am?

- Pre-read: Mark, chapters 8–15

##### Article 5 Page 28

##### The Gospel of Mark, Part 3:

##### The Empty Tomb Changes Everything

- Pre-read: Mark, chapter 16

## Article 1

# Discovering Jesus: The Adventure Begins

“From the first day that I walked through those doors, those are magic doors . . . I saw kinship and love.” These are the words of Mariana, recalling the first time she entered Homeboy Industries. Founded in 1988 by Jesuit priest Fr. Greg Boyle, Homeboy Industries is an organization that offers job training and free programs and support services. Homeboy works to help formerly gang-involved and previously incarcerated men and women in the Los Angeles area to change their lives for the better. Having been a drug user for seventeen years, Mariana never imagined her life could change, but she had a desire for something more. By responding to that desire and choosing to pass through those doors, she discovered the love of Jesus Christ. She also found a community of faith and support, and she worked to heal her own brokenness. Mariana has earned her GED, has finished the 18-month program at Homeboy, and has been promoted as a core member of the Homeboy staff. She will soon move on to a new job as a prison re-entry case manager.



courtesy Homeboy Industries

Fr. Greg Boyle works alongside formerly gang-involved and previously incarcerated men at Homeboy Industries.

## Saint Paul's Shocking Transformation

It is amazing how discovering the love of Jesus Christ and placing your faith in him really does change lives. Mariana's story is definitely not unique. The Church's history is filled with stories of people who have turned their lives around after placing their faith in Jesus Christ. One dramatic example of this is Saul of Tarsus, better known now as Saint Paul. If you haven't done so already, take a moment to read the story of Saint Paul's conversion in Acts 7:54–8:3, 9:1–22. His story begins shortly after Jesus Christ had ascended into **Heaven**. Paul is first introduced as a threatening figure standing in the background, witnessing Saint Stephen being stoned to death. In that act, Paul actively approves of the death of the first **martyr** for the Christian faith. Paul goes on to hunt down many other followers of Jesus Christ and sees to it that they too suffer the same fate as Stephen (see Acts 8:3).

Then one day, it all changes for Paul when he meets the risen Jesus Christ. Even while Paul is “breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1), Jesus Christ reaches out to him on the road to Damascus. Through that encounter, Paul's heart and life are radically changed. Saint Paul not only becomes a Christian but also one of Christianity's most zealous advocates, spreading the saving message of Christ crucified and risen everywhere he goes.



When Paul encounters the Risen Christ, it is a life-transforming event. He goes on to be one of Christianity's most zealous advocates.

**Heaven** ➤ A state of eternal life and union with God, in which one experiences full happiness and the satisfaction of the deepest human longings.

**martyr** ➤ A person who voluntarily suffers death because of his or her beliefs. The Church has canonized many martyrs as saints.

## TAKE IT TO GOD

Ever-loving God, who desires a relationship with all people,  
I come humbly before you.  
Please open my heart and my mind  
so that I may truly hear what it is that you want me to hear.  
Help me this semester to not just study about you,  
but to fall in love with you more deeply.  
And may all my actions in and out of class  
always reflect your calling of humble service toward others.  
I ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

### Everyone Has Their Own Story

You may not have the same experiences as Mariana or be actively persecuting the Church like Paul, but Jesus Christ does call each one of us to **conversion**. Conversion is responding to Jesus' offer of love by turning away from sin and its effects and actively seeking to do God's will. Whether you are stopped on the road with a blinding light and a booming voice as was Saint Paul, or pulled by a desire for something more out of life like Mariana, Jesus is reaching out to you. Jesus initiates the relationship, inviting us to believe in him. Our role is to respond.

When we open our hearts to Jesus by inviting him in and saying we are sorry for our sins, we receive the gift of God's **grace** in our lives. Grace helps us in our efforts to avoid sin and live our lives as Jesus teaches. For Jesus is "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Just like Mariana, who finds the grace daily to fight her drug addiction, Jesus offers that same grace to all of us. His grace helps us discover and follow God's plan for our lives, avoid sin, and ultimately spend eternity with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in Heaven. He is worthy of our belief, adoration, and love!

**conversion** ► A profound change of heart, turning away from sin and toward God.

**grace** ► The free and undeserved gift that God gives us to empower us to respond to his call and to live as his adopted sons and daughters. Grace restores our loving communion with the Holy Trinity, lost through sin.

We have to ask for God’s grace to respond to Jesus’ call to turn away from sin and live a life of holiness each day. These daily choices help us to be single-hearted in our love for God and to put aside things that lead us away from God.

Mariana could have chosen not to walk through those doors at Homeboy, but she did. Since that day, Mariana could have chosen to return to drugs, but she hasn’t. Paul could have said no to Jesus, but he said yes. Paul could have quit spreading the Good News once he met resistance and things got difficult, but he didn’t. Look at how God transformed both of their lives. Paul’s life truly became an adventure, and Mariana is experiencing new joy and helping others find that joy for themselves. What great and wonderful things await you when you say yes to God’s invitation!

## What’s So Great about Jesus?

Clearly, there is something powerful about the life and message of Jesus Christ. For two thousand years, he’s been changing people’s lives. Millions of people have found joy and hope after placing their faith in him. Tens of thousands of people, from the time of the first Christians to today, have willingly died rather than denounce God. People from other religions look up to Jesus as a great prophet and a spiritual leader. People who do not believe in God find his life and moral teachings admirable. He is indeed “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

How well do you know Jesus? This book is an introduction to his life and message. In the remainder of this chapter, we will explore the Gospel of Mark to learn some basics about his mission on Earth. In subsequent chapters, we will study what Scripture and Tradition reveal about him, especially through other **New Testament** writings. As you understand more deeply what it means to put your faith in Jesus, you will discover that God is calling you to a great adventure too. Are you ready for the adventure God has planned for you? ✨



How We  
Got the New  
Testament

# HMMMMMM.

Why did Paul’s encounter with Jesus Christ affect his life so profoundly?

---

**New Testament** ► The twenty-seven books of the Bible, which have the life, teachings, Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ and the beginnings of the Church as their central theme.

## Article 2

# The Life and Times of Jesus

Clarissa’s grandma was telling her another story about what life was like when Grandma was a teen. “Here we go again,” thought Clarissa, “another lecture on the evils of smartphones.” Suddenly Grandma stopped and looked directly at her. “I’m sorry,” Grandma said. “I know it must sound like I’m lecturing. But I just want you to know that the way we live today isn’t the way people have always lived. And I thought you might better understand the things I love if you knew a little more about my life growing up.”

What’s true for Clarissa and her grandma is also true when it comes to reading about Jesus in the Gospels. The way we live today is different from the way people lived during Jesus’ lifetime. If we understand some basic things about the way the people of his time lived, then many of the things Jesus said and did become clearer for us.

## Daily Life during the Time of Jesus

Let’s get some of the obvious things out of the way. People living in first-century Palestine (Jesus’ time and country) had almost none of the technology we enjoy today. They didn’t have electricity or gasoline engines, so there were no planes, trains, or automobiles. They didn’t even have indoor plumbing (unless you were among the very wealthy). So, a large part of women’s days was spent on things we take for granted: getting water, cooking food, making clothes, and so on.



There was little technology in first-century Palestine. Most things, such as planting, cooking, getting water, and making clothes, were done by hand.

Notice we said “women’s days.” The culture at that time was **patriarchal**. For the most part, men held the political, economic, and religious power. The primary social role of a woman was to be a wife and mother. Women took care of domestic tasks, and men were responsible for whatever economic livelihood sustained the family. Fathers made all the important decisions for the family, including arranging their daughter’s marriages. Some of the ways Jesus interacted with women seemed to break these social norms.

What did the men do to make a living? Most of their work was agricultural. Many were farmers. Some raised sheep and goats. Some were fishermen. A few were craftsmen, like Jesus and his foster father, Joseph. Many of them didn’t have their own land and would hire themselves out as **tenant farmers** to work the land of wealthy landowners. It is estimated that about 90 percent of the families at that time worked on farms or shepherded animals or both. This is why Jesus used so many farming, fishing, and shepherding examples in his parables.

If one primary cultural value defines life in first-century Palestine, it is commitment to family—and not just your father, mother, brothers, and sisters but your grandparents, uncles, aunts, great-uncles, great-aunts, and all your cousins. Probably you all lived together in the same village—there’s a good chance everyone in your village was related to you by blood or marriage. You would think of your uncles and aunts as your other moms and dads and your cousins as your other brothers and sisters. You would probably even marry a second or third cousin! You would grow up and die in that village, always surrounded by your family. And you wouldn’t do anything your family didn’t approve of.

## The Haves and the Have Nots

Another kind of work that ordinary people could do during the time of Jesus was to hire themselves out as **indentured servants**. The majority of the population we have been discussing was poor by our standards. They had just enough to feed themselves and provide the necessities of life. They lived in homes they built out of stone or dried mud. And if they fell on hard times, the only way some could survive was by essentially selling themselves as slaves to wealthy families.

---

**patriarchal** ➤ Describes a society, government, or religion in which the positions of power are held by men and important decisions are made by men.

**tenant farmer** ➤ A farmer who works someone else’s land, paying the landowner a percentage of the crops or animals raised.

**indentured servant** ➤ A person who is under contract to work for another person for a period of time, usually without pay; often considered a form of slavery.

People could do this because a small percentage of the population was very wealthy and needed many servants to keep their estates running smoothly. Often called the **elites**, these families owned large, beautifully decorated homes in the big cities, with indoor plumbing and many rooms for entertaining. They owned the majority of the land in the countryside, which they leased out to tenant farmers. They ate and drank expensive wines and foods. They took advantage of the rest of the population through poor wages and heavy taxation.

This system of haves and have-nots is not God's vision for humankind as revealed in the Bible. God promises Abraham that there will be fertile land for all his descendants, not just a chosen few. When the Israelites move into the Promised Land, Joshua divides it up fairly between all the tribes. And the **Old Law** of the Old Testament even provided a way to redistribute the land every fifty years so that those who lost ownership of their family's land could have it restored (see Leviticus 25:8-17). It should not surprise us that Jesus has some challenging and even harsh words for the elites who ignore the needs of the less fortunate in their midst.



A Roman soldier's backpack weighed 70 pounds! Most of what they carried was construction tools used for digging and shaping the rocks used to build Roman roads. So when soldiers weren't putting down rebellions, they were building the roads that connected the Roman Empire. Here's an interesting fact: Roman law allowed Roman soldiers to force any non-Roman citizen to carry the soldier's pack for a mile. Wonder what Jesus' followers thought when Jesus said to them, "Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles" (Matthew 5: 41)?



**elites** ➤ A select group that has the most power and influence in a society, typically because of wealth and social status.

**Old Law** ➤ Divine Law revealed in the Old Testament, summarized in the Ten Commandments. Also call the Law of Moses.

## Roman and Jewish Groups

First-century Palestine was part of the Roman Empire, but this wasn't by choice. The Romans took control of Palestine about sixty years before the birth of Christ (63 BC). The Romans typically allowed the lands they conquered to be overseen by local rulers as long as they pledged their allegiance to Rome. This led to a complex mix of Roman and Jewish political leaders in Palestine.

### KEY PLAYERS AT THE TIME OF JESUS

<b>King Herod the Great</b>	Herod was the Jewish (actually half-Jewish) king at the time Jesus was born. He was ambitious, brutal, and successful. He rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem, enlarging it and making it a wonder of the ancient world.
<b>Herod Antipas, Herod Archelaus, Philip Tetrarch, Salome, Herod Agrippa</b>	The children and grandchildren of Herod the Great who ruled different parts of Palestine after Herod's death.
<b>Pontius Pilate</b>	The Roman governor who was sent by Rome to rule over Jerusalem after Herod's children proved to be poor rulers. He was ruthless, putting down several Jewish rebellions with mass crucifixions of Jews.
<b>centurions</b>	These men were commanders in the Roman army. A centurion commanded a group of eighty to one hundred soldiers and took his orders from a higher officer or the Roman governor.

As far as the religious side of things goes, several different Jewish groups existed during the life of Jesus. Each of these groups agreed on essential Jewish beliefs, but each group had its own take on what it meant to be a good Jew. Jesus encounters members of these groups throughout the Gospels. We can better understand his response to each group if we understand their philosophies.



Herod Archelaus ruled Palestine in the same brutal fashion as his father, Herod the Great.

## GROUPS JESUS ENCOUNTERS AND THEIR PHILOSOPHIES

<b>Chief priests and the High Priest</b>	This group led the religious services and conducted the animal sacrifices held at the Temple in Jerusalem. At the time of Jesus, the High Priest was appointed by the Jewish king with the approval of the Roman governor. Both the king and the High Priest benefited from Roman rule and were seen by many as collaborators with Rome.
<b>Pharisees</b>	This group of Jews was known for its strict adherence to all the laws of the Old Testament. They believed in the resurrection of the dead.
<b>Sadducees</b>	This group of Jews consisted largely of the elite, wealthy class; many were chief priests. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.
<b>Scribes</b>	These people were scholars and teachers of the Jewish Law and Scripture. They were associated with both the chief priests and the Pharisees.
<b>Zealots</b>	These people believed that God wanted Israel to be an independent nation again, free from foreign rule. They preached a violent overthrow of the Roman occupiers.



# HMMMMMM...

Jesus told the crowds following him, “If any one comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). Given their cultural values, how do you think people would react after hearing this?

**chief priest** ➤ This person led the religious services and conducted animal sacrifices held at the Temple in Jerusalem.

**High Priest** ➤ This person led the religious services and conducted animal sacrifices held at the Temple in Jerusalem. The High Priest was appointed by the Jewish king with the approval of the Roman governor.

**Pharisees** ➤ This group of Jews was well known for its strict adherence to all the laws of the Old Testament. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead.

**Sadducees** ➤ This group of Jews consisted largely of the elite, wealthy class; many were chief priests. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

**scribes** ➤ These people were scholars and teachers of the Jewish Law and Scripture. They were associated with both the chief priests and the Pharisees.

**Zealots** ➤ These people believed that God wanted Israel to be an independent nation again, free from foreign rule. They preached a violent overthrow of the Roman occupiers.

## Article 3

# The Gospel of Mark, Part 1: The Human Face of God

Have you ever listened to a young child trying to tell a story they are really excited about? Usually it sounds something like this: “And then . . . (deep breath) and then . . . (deep breath) and then . . .” In many ways, the Gospel of Mark is like that excited young child. It’s the shortest of the four Gospels and is told with the excitement of a child. For example, the words *and* and *immediately* appear frequently throughout the text. The first half of the Gospel moves rapidly from scene to scene, jumping months between events. Then it slows dramatically, counting down time by the hours as Jesus’ Crucifixion approaches. Along the way, Mark gives us great insight into Jesus’ humanity. So if you have never read a Gospel from beginning to end, Mark is a good Gospel to start with.

### CATHOLICS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Can you imagine a life with no arms? Do you think you would feel sorry for yourself and focus on the things that you could not do? Tony Melendez is a guitar player, composer, singer, and songwriter who was born without arms. His mother was prescribed Thalidomide while pregnant, which caused his disability. Tony did not feel sorry for himself or accept that there were just going to be things he could not do. He learned to play Frisbee, write, compose music, and play guitar—all with his feet! In high school, he became deeply involved in the Catholic Church. He even played one of his original songs for Pope Saint John Paul II! Tony has continued his music ministry by starting the Toe Jam Band and always reserves the front rows at his concerts for young people.



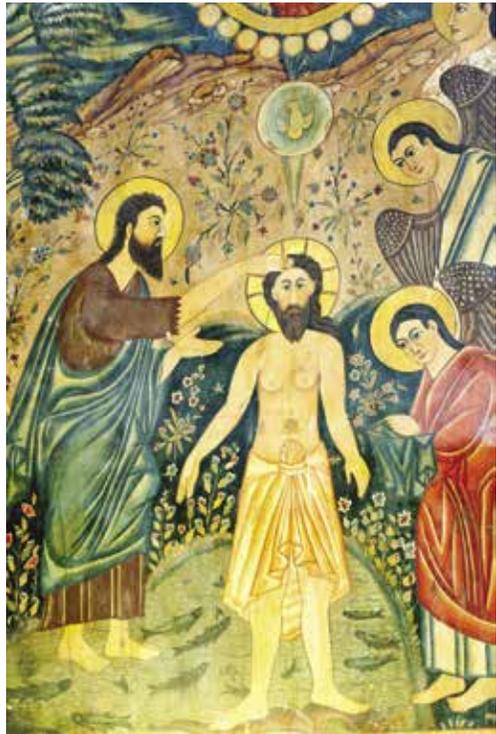
© AP Photo/Luis M. Alvarez

## Who Was Mark's Audience?

To understand better some of the themes in the Gospel of Mark, it helps to know what was happening around the time the Gospel was written. Many scholars believe the Gospel of Mark was written around AD 70 for Christians living in Rome. Around this time, the people of Rome had experienced several disasters. In AD 64, fire broke out in Rome and burned for several days, destroying parts of the city. The emperor, Nero, blamed the fire on the Christians. This led to persecution of the Christians. It is even said that Nero burned Christians on crosses at night to help light the city. During this time, many Christians were so frightened that they denied their faith in an effort to escape persecution. Those who denied their faith, and perhaps even turned in their fellow Christians to save their own lives, were called **apostates**. This atmosphere of fear and betrayal is in part what Mark addresses in his Gospel.

## Mark, Chapter 1: Setting the Stage

As followers of Jesus, we depend on our recognition and acceptance of him as the Son of God who died to save us from our sins. The first verse of the Gospel makes a bold proclamation: Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Mark then tells of John the Baptist's humility in heralding the coming of God's Son. Jesus' own Baptism follows, highlighted by God the Father's heavenly voice declaring to Jesus, "You are my beloved Son" (Mark 1:11). Jesus is immediately led into the desert, where he is tempted by the devil. From the beginning, we see that Jesus, the Son of God, though welcomed by some, will be in a battle against evil in his efforts to save us from our sins.



Why do you think Jesus wanted John to baptize him?

**apostate** ► One who denies or renounces one's faith.

## Real Human Emotions

In the chapters that follow, numerous accounts of Jesus helping people reveal not only Jesus' power but also his humanity. One notable element of Jesus' human nature is his emotion and the way he chooses to respond to his feelings. Mark describes Jesus as having pity and compassion, as we see in his encounters with a leper (see Mark 1:40–45) or when seeing the crowds as “sheep without a shepherd” (6:34). In response, Jesus heals the leper and begins teaching the crowd.

Jesus, like all human beings, at times feels tired and hungry. Sometimes he is able to find rest, such as when he is asleep in the boat (see Mark 4:35–39). Other times, he has to actively seek solitude so he can have time to relax and eat. Yet in these instances, even Jesus' attempts to rest are interrupted by the needs of others. When he tries to sleep in the boat, he is awoken by the disciples. They are distressed because of a storm, and Jesus immediately comes to their aid by calming the storm. When seeking solitude, the crowds follow Jesus, so he multiplies the loaves and fish to feed them (see 6:30–44). In all these examples, we see Jesus' human nature and how he responds with his whole person—emotion, will, and reason—all contributing to his perfect response of love and compassion.



Jesus experienced real human emotions. His human nature allows him to respond to others with compassion.

## Dealing with Rejection and Opposition

Jesus' human nature is also revealed in his response to the opposition he faces. If you have ever been misunderstood, do not worry. The Gospel of Mark reveals a Savior who definitely knows what it feels like to be misunderstood and even rejected. Throughout the first eight chapters, Jesus repeatedly runs into opposition, and Mark describes the variety of Jesus' emotions.

Let's look at one example in Mark 3:1–6. Jesus is about to heal a man with a withered hand, but the Pharisees are watching to see if Jesus breaks the Sabbath commandment by healing the man. They believe that healing is work, and the law says you cannot work on the **Sabbath**. Mark tells us Jesus is angry with the Pharisees and “grieved at their hardness of heart” (3:5).

**Sabbath** ► A day of religious observance and abstinence from work, kept by Jews from Friday evening to Saturday evening, and by most Christians on Sunday.

We call this type of anger “righteous indignation,” because we are rightly upset over an injustice and the lack of compassion. Jesus cures the man, knowing that it will upset the Pharisees and even bring them one step closer to calling for his death. Sometimes doing the right thing can result in great personal sacrifice.

Jesus even experiences lack of support and understanding from his closest friends. In chapter 6, Jesus visits his hometown of Nazareth and is amazed by the people’s lack of belief in him. Instead of arguing with them, Jesus heals a few of their sick and then moves on to the next town. Like many Old Testament prophets, Jesus is rejected by his own community. The prophet Micah is accused of being a false prophet (see Micah 2:6). Jeremiah is barred from entering the Temple because his preaching is considered inflammatory (see Jeremiah 36:5). Amos is told several times to be quiet (see Amos 2:12, 7:13). Jesus is aware of this history and understands that sometimes God’s prophets—including Jesus himself—are rejected by those who most need to hear them.

## Conclusion

From Mark’s presentation of Jesus’ ministry in the first half of the Gospel, we begin to see the humanity of Jesus. The difficulties we experience in our lives, and the emotions that come with them, are not unlike what Jesus himself experienced. It is reassuring to know we have a Savior who understands what it is like to be human. However, there are two important differences between Jesus and us. First, Jesus is fully human but also fully God. Second, Jesus is like us in all things except sin. Knowing that he has never sinned means we can look at how he reacts to situations and use those examples as the perfect model for how we should act in similar circumstances. ✨

## OVERVIEW of the Gospel of Mark

- **Intended audience:** Christians living in Rome who were being persecuted.
- **Theme:** Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah who suffered, died, and rose from the dead for us.
- **Reason for writing:** To show persecuted Christians that suffering is part of being a disciple of Jesus and that if they keep their faith in Jesus Christ, they will not suffer in vain.

HMMMMM. . .

Think of an event that evokes a particularly strong emotion for you. Share the story of the event with a partner. Then discuss how Jesus might have responded in both circumstances.

## Article 4

# The Gospel of Mark, Part 2: Who Do You Say That I Am?



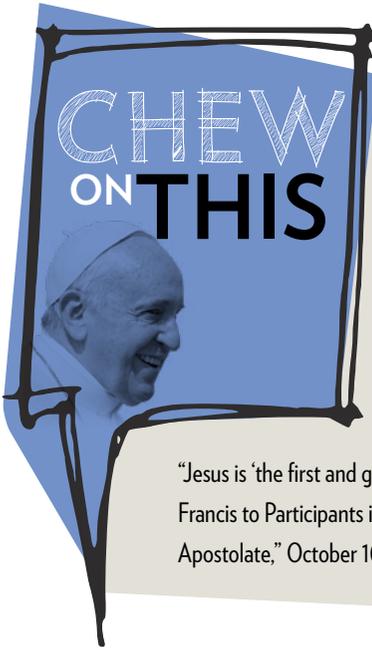
Prayer

After eight chapters describing Jesus' teaching and powerful deeds, we arrive at the midpoint of the Gospel of Mark. Jesus turns to the **disciples** and asks them, "Who do people say that I am?" (Mark 8:27) and later, "Who do you say that I am?" (verse 29). The placement of these questions in the middle of the Gospel of Mark is an intentional literary technique used by the author of the Gospel. Everything that has happened so far leads up to Jesus' questions, and everything that happens in the second half of the Gospel flows from the answer to his questions.

## Who Do People Say That I Am?

After Jesus asks the question "Who do people say that I am?" the disciples respond, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets" (Mark 8:28). If you were a first-century Jewish person, any of these three answers might seem reasonable. Like John the Baptist, Jesus calls people to repentance and preaches about the Kingdom of God. Elijah is a miracle worker who confronts authority. Jesus also works miracles and confronts authority, so many think he might be Elijah returned from Heaven. Finally, Jesus speaks for God like the prophets do, so it makes sense to think he might be a prophet. But Jesus is not John the Baptist, Elijah, or only a prophet. None of these answers captures Jesus' true identity as the Son of God, the Word of God Made Flesh.

The people in biblical times are like people of today. We often let our own ideas of who Jesus should be in our lives get in the way of his true identity. For example, we often bargain with Jesus, promising to change our behavior if we pass a test or to reform our ways if he helps us to escape the negative consequences of our actions. However, this is not how the saving power of Christ works in our lives. We don't need to bargain with Jesus for him to love us! He wants us to become his disciples and accept his love and grace. He will give us the courage and strength to take responsibility for our actions and choose daily to follow him.



Contemplating the life of Jesus and looking at ourselves as pilgrims in this world with so many challenges, we feel the need of a profound conversion and the urgency to rekindle faith in him. Only then can we serve our neighbor in charity! Every day we are called to renew our trust in Christ and to draw inspiration from his life in order to fulfil our mission, because

“Jesus is ‘the first and greatest evangelizer.’” (Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the General Chapter of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate,” October 10, 2016)

## “Who Do You Say That I Am?”

Having heard these first responses, Jesus then asks his disciples the question that every person must ultimately answer: “Who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:29). It seems that Jesus wants them to dig deeper and to answer for themselves. Peter gives the right answer: “You are the **Messiah**.” So why does Jesus immediately instruct the disciples not to tell anyone about this (see verse 30)? It all has to do with the Jewish People’s expectations.

At the time, many Jews believed the messiah would be an earthly military or political ruler, like King David in the Old Testament. They hoped the messiah would overthrow Rome’s rule and return the **Promised Land** to the Jewish People.

However, Jesus was a very different Messiah than they were expecting. His Kingdom is not of this Earth, and human understandings of power do not apply to his spiritual realm. Instead, Jesus explains that the Messiah must suffer, die, and be raised from the dead to save the world from sin and death.

---

**Messiah** ► Hebrew word for “anointed one.” The equivalent Greek term is *Christos*. Jesus is the Christ and the Messiah because he is the Anointed One.

**Promised Land** ► In the Bible, the land of Canaan, which was promised to Abraham and his descendants.

A suffering messiah is different from the strong military ruler people were expecting. One reason Jesus may have wanted the disciples to keep his identity secret is that he did not want the people to be confused. He wanted them to understand his real mission before they started calling him the Messiah.



Jesus upset common expectations about the Messiah by humbling himself in actions like washing the feet of the Apostles.

Peter is the perfect example of this confusion over the role of the Messiah. He does not accept the idea that the Messiah must suffer and die, so he rebukes Jesus—that is, he tries to convince Jesus that he is wrong:

He [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke this openly. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.” (Mark 8:31-33)

It may sound harsh when Jesus tells Peter, “Get behind me, Satan,” but Peter, and the other Apostles as well, were struggling to see how Jesus’ suffering was necessary. Jesus has to help them see that God the Father’s saving plan involves suffering; and Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, is here to fulfill it.

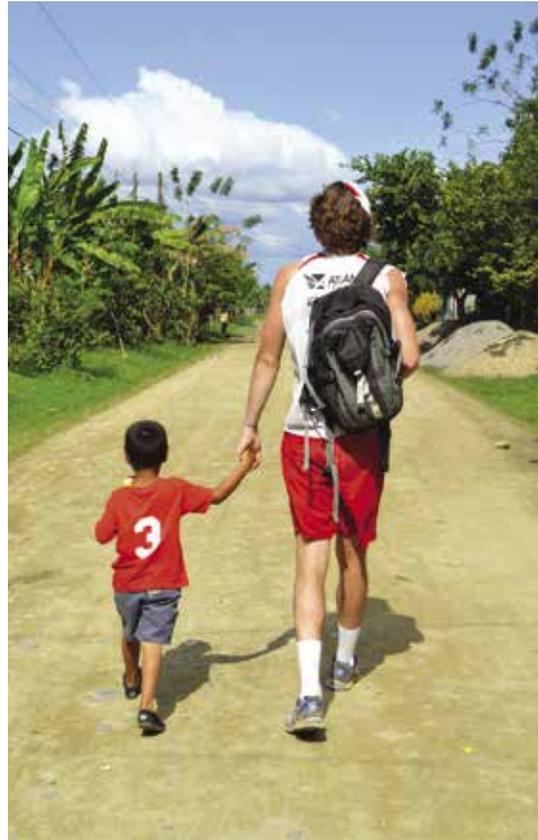
## The Path of Discipleship

Because Jesus is a different type of messiah, it makes sense that he requires a different type of follower, or disciple. After explaining the he must suffer, Jesus teaches that his disciples must also be willing to put aside their own desires and follow God’s will. He says to them, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34). We quickly learn that if Jesus, the Messiah, is willing to suffer, his followers must be willing to suffer as well. This is a challenging call, to say the least.

Like Peter, we may not want ourselves or our loved ones to experience the sacrifice that comes with being a disciple of Christ. For example, we may not want to face the shame of admitting we have done something wrong. Or we may not want to experience the rejection that can happen when we choose not to participate in the sinful choices other people are making. However, sharing in Jesus' mission means accepting that sacrifice is sometimes part of that mission. Jesus gives us an example of the courage needed to accept the sacrifices we need to make, trusting that it will lead to healing in this life and eternal life with God after death.

## Dropping Our Preconceived Ideas

From this crucial conversation in the middle of the Gospel of Mark, we learn that we too are called to trust in what Jesus reveals about himself. We learn that to truly live as one of Jesus' disciples we must accept our crosses—the hardships and sacrifices that can come with being faithful to God's will. Thanks be to God that he provides us the grace we need to do this. We do not become disciples by simply choosing it on our own. God takes the initiative in calling us. If we accept, God gives us the strength to persevere. What a blessed gift! What a wonderful call! ✨



What does it mean to you to live as a disciple of Jesus?

**HMMMMM...**

How surprised were you that Peter argued with Jesus? How might “arguing” with God be a good thing?

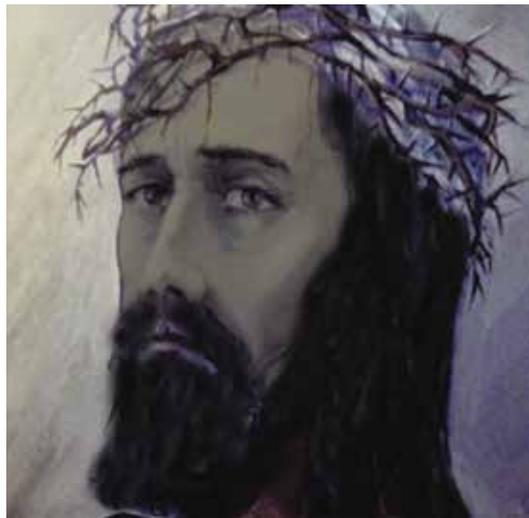
## Article 5

# The Gospel of Mark, Part 3: The Empty Tomb Changes Everything

As the Gospel of Mark moves towards Jesus' **Passion**, death, and **Resurrection**—events that together form the **Paschal Mystery**—Jesus' identity as the Suffering Messiah comes into full view. The sense of Jesus' suffering is heightened as Mark tells how the disciples misunderstand and then completely abandon Jesus. It is hard to get through a difficult time even when you have the support of your friends and loved ones. Imagine how much harder it was for Jesus without their support.

## The Lonely Path to the Cross

The disciples' misunderstanding and eventual abandonment of Jesus is highlighted more in Mark than in the other three Gospels. Recall that Peter rebukes Jesus right after Jesus tells the disciples that the Messiah must suffer and die. Unfortunately, the disciples' missteps continue. They try to turn away children brought to Jesus for a blessing. Jesus admonishes



© 2018 www.TheGospelStory.com

Though Jesus' Apostles and friends loved and followed him, Jesus ultimately faced his final hours suffering and alone.

**Passion** ► The suffering and death of Jesus during the final days of his life: his agony in the garden at Gethsemane, his trial, and his Crucifixion.

**Resurrection** ► The bodily rising of Jesus from the dead on the third day after his death on the cross; the heart of the Paschal Mystery and the basis of our hope in the resurrection of the dead.

**Paschal Mystery** ► The work of salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ mainly through his Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

them for doing this (see Mark 10:13–15). In another story, James and John seek a place of honor in Jesus' Kingdom, failing to understand discipleship in terms of suffering and self-sacrifice (see 10:35–45). Later, one of Jesus' closest followers, Judas, agrees to betray Jesus for money (see 14:10–11).

As Jesus' arrest and Crucifixion draw near, consider these events:

- While praying in the garden, Jesus is in emotional agony. Where are the disciples? They are asleep even though Jesus asked them to pray with him (see Matthew 25:36–46).
- When the crowd arrives to arrest Jesus, one of his disciples fights back and cuts off the ear of the High Priest's slave. The disciple still doesn't accept that Jesus needs to suffer and die, despite the fact that Jesus had told them three times that this must happen (see Mark 8:31, 9:32, 10:32–34).
- As Jesus is being interrogated by the High Priest, Peter denies being one of Jesus' disciples three times. The final time he even curses and swears that he is not, the ultimate denial (see Mark 14:66–72).
- As Jesus is dying in agony, having been whipped and nailed to the cross, none of his followers are with him. Only a few of the women are brave enough to look on from a distance (see Mark 15:40).

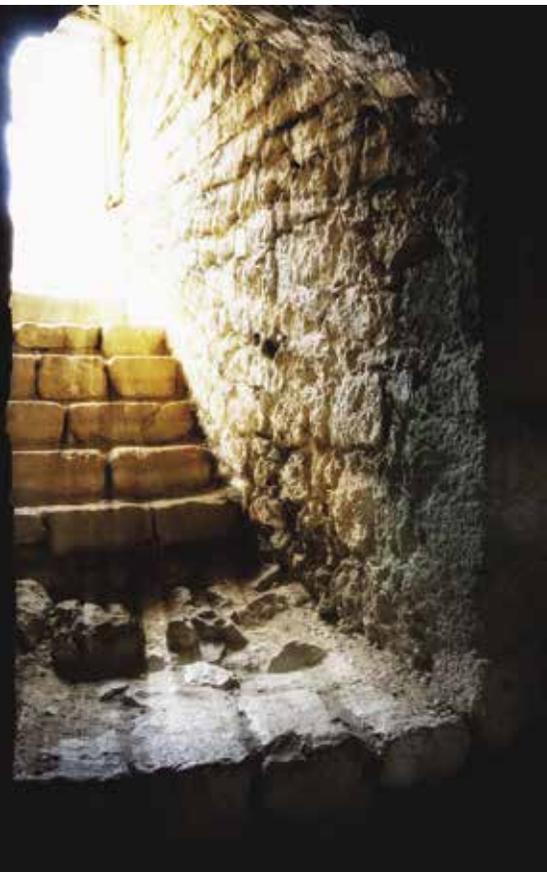
Taken together, these events create a dramatic picture of Jesus suffering a terrible death. He is in complete physical, mental, and emotional agony. But he is only one among thousands of people crucified by the Roman Empire. His story should have ended with his death. What led to Christ's dramatic impact on so many people over the last two thousand years?

## MAKE IT SO

It is challenging to spread the Good News in today's society. Maybe part of the problem is that we need to share our beliefs in a way that is easy for others to encounter and understand. Today people communicate with short messages through social media. How can you use social media to encourage and inspire others? Share your faith in creative ways that invite people to believe in Jesus' saving work.

## The Empty Tomb and Appearances

If Mark ended his account of Jesus' life with his death on the cross, it would be a depressing story. However, Jesus' suffering, abandonment, and death are not the final events of his life. In fact, they are just the beginning of something remarkable. Mark tells us that early Sunday morning, three women arrive at Jesus' tomb wondering who will roll away the large stone (see Mark 16:1–8). They come to find the stone has already been removed. It is amazing how God removes barriers when we are seeking Jesus. The women enter the tomb and to their shock, they find not Jesus' body, but a young man dressed in white. The young man announces the amazing news—Jesus is raised from the dead! He then instructs the women to go tell the disciples the Good News. However, the women do just the opposite, running away in fear and telling no one.



How do you think Jesus' close friends and followers feel when they discover that the tomb is empty?

The original ending of the Gospel of Mark is a cliffhanger, ending with the empty tomb and no accounts of the resurrected Jesus. If this were a movie, this is where the screen would go black and the credits would begin to roll. The abrupt ending leaves us, the readers, with some important questions. Did you understand Jesus' message even though his disciples struggled to understand? Do you accept him as the suffering Messiah, the Son of God who saves us through his suffering and death on the cross? Will you share this Good News with others, even though the first witnesses were afraid to share it?

You probably noticed that there is a longer ending to the Gospel (see Mark 16:9–20). The earliest manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark do not have this longer ending. No one is certain when the longer ending was added, nor are we sure who wrote it. Despite our uncertainty about its origins, we are certain that it is part of the canon of Scripture. It is the **inspired** Word of God and has something to reveal to us.

In the longer ending, the resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples three times. First, he appears to Mary Magdalene (see Mark 16:9–11; this also occurs in the Gospel of John). She goes and tells the others that she has seen the resurrected Jesus, but they do not believe her. They also do not believe the two disciples that meet Jesus while walking out of Jerusalem (see Mark 16:12–13). Mark gives us a brief version of this story, and Luke beautifully expands upon it, as you will see when you read Luke 24:13–35.

You may find it curious that the disciples do not believe their friends' testimony that Jesus really rose from the dead. But imagine being in their place. You would desperately want Jesus to be alive again, but it is just too incredible to believe that he has risen from the dead. You don't want your hopes dashed again, so you do not take the risk of believing in something so incredible. Jesus overcomes their lack of faith by appearing to all eleven Apostles (see Mark 16:14–18). This is a proof they cannot ignore, and we can only imagine their joy and surprise.

However, believing is not enough. Jesus sends them to the whole world to proclaim that he has risen from the dead. The one thing no human can escape, death, Jesus has overcome. Jesus tells the Apostles to baptize the new followers and to expect great things to happen. They will do wonders through Jesus Christ. Wonders can and will be done through us as his followers too.

The longer ending concludes with Jesus' Ascension. He is "taken up into heaven" and seated "at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19). It ends by telling us that the disciples are no longer controlled by fear and doubt. They go forth proclaiming the Good News just as they are told. The fact that there are so many Christians today testifies to the success of their efforts in spreading the Gospel.

## What Difference Does the Resurrection Make?

So, what difference does Christ's Resurrection make? It makes all the difference in this world and the next. It is the proof that God's plan for salvation has been accomplished! Through the life, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ, God has saved us from our sin. We call this amazing process of God's saving plan the Paschal Mystery. You will learn more about it in the next course. For now, understand that Jesus' passing over from death to life is the same process each one of us must follow as his disciples. We must die to self so that we too may rise with Christ.

The Resurrection also gives new meaning to suffering. Following Jesus does not mean that life will always be easy; there will be suffering involved. Jesus' life, especially as described in the Gospel of Mark, shows that God's plan sometimes involves sacrifice and suffering. Thankfully, God's plan is so much greater than just the suffering. When connected to God's plan, suffering for the sake of righteousness becomes something we as disciples can offer in imitation of Jesus. Sadly, our culture often encourages us to avoid suffering at all costs. Jesus shows us how to embrace suffering as a means to share in his saving mission. Imagine the hope this understanding gave to Mark's original audience as they suffered in Rome. Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection teach us that the way to salvation is to hold on to our faith even when things get difficult.



We are often immune to the effects of war, famine, and disease in our world today. What are some ways in which modern culture distracts tries to distract you from suffering?

Jesus' Resurrection also radically transforms the meaning of the cross. What was viewed as a means of torture and humiliation has become a symbol of hope for Christians everywhere. We are a people of hope, knowing that suffering and death do not have the last word. Our Church community is a gathering of people committed to belief in Jesus Christ's Resurrection and the hope that he offers. As Jesus' disciples, we are called to actively participate in the Church community and to work tirelessly spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ by word and deed to all. We do this by offering hope, especially to those who are suffering the most.

Throughout this unit, we will be exploring the question "Why believe in Jesus?" After reading the Gospel of Mark, many reasons become apparent. We believe in him because as our Savior and God he has experienced the challenges of life just as we have. The Savior has shown us how God can take humility and self-sacrifice to transform suffering into something glorious. Discovering what it means to be a disciple is a journey. When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, we are also called to accept all that he teaches about what it means to be his disciple. ✱

HMMMMMM...

What effect does the empty tomb have on your understanding of Jesus' suffering, and what it means to be a disciple?



1. What is the one aspect about Paul's conversion that makes it such a powerful example to others?
2. What type of messiah were some people expecting during Jesus' time?
3. Name one of the religious groups Jesus encountered and explain its philosophy.
4. Give three examples showing how Jesus' followers abandoned him when things got tough.
5. How does Jesus' Resurrection transform the meaning of the cross?
6. Why does Mark specifically focus on Jesus' challenges and suffering?
7. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus says that whoever wants to be a disciple must "take up his cross, and follow me" (8:34). Why does Jesus say this?



Chapter 1 Quiz

Chapter 1  
PresentationChapter 1  
Vocabulary



## ART STUDY

### A CLASSICAL PAINTING OF JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

This classical painting gives us many clues about the culture during Jesus' life, as well as how the Crucifixion affected those around him.

1. How does this piece of artwork make you feel?
2. What elements of Jesus' life and culture are represented in this painting?
3. Why are images of Christ's Crucifixion so prominent in Catholic churches?