

AIM

- To help the group see the evidence for the unique identity of Jesus.
- To show that Jesus has the power and authority of God.
- To challenge group members to consider the implications of this for their own lives.

REVIEW

- Single Focus is about a relationship, not religion. Therefore, we study our Bible to learn about a Person not rules.
 - Your experiences with Christianity may have left you feeling as if religion and the Bible have nothing to do with real life—are hopelessly irrelevant and out-of-touch. If that’s the case, we’re suggesting that you were never really introduced to what the purpose and message of the Bible really is.
 - The *Christianity Explored* course is designed by people who once felt that way too. The course exists to clear away all the misconceptions about Christianity so that you can examine the facts for yourself.
- **Illustration:**
 - It is rather like admiring a car that is for sale, and the person who is selling it hands you the key and says you can test drive it for a few weeks – to put it through its paces, see how it works, and discover if it is a car you would like to own.
 - On *Christianity Explored* we are saying: “Here is Mark’s Gospel – here is the ignition key to Christianity. Take it for a test drive for ten weeks. Ask any questions you like, put the Christian world-view through its paces, see how it works, and discover if it makes sense of life in a way that nothing else does.”
- On this course we will discover from Mark’s Gospel (1) who Jesus is—HIS IDENTITY, (2) why he came into the world—HIS MISSION, and (3) what it means to follow him—HIS CALL. This is big news, and it is great news.

EXPLORE

- As for any questions over last week’s follow-up reading and questions:
 1. Read Mark 1:1-20 – The word “gospel” means “good news.” Mark begins his book of good news with three statements about Jesus.
 - a. by the Old Testament prophets (messengers) (Mark 1:2-3)
 - b. by John the Baptist (or Baptizer) (Mark 1:7)
 - c. by God Himself (Mark 1:11)

What do they each say about Jesus?

- a. The Old Testament prophets pointed to Jesus as the Lord. They said someone would come before Him to prepare the way for Him.
 - b. John the Baptist, himself a great prophet, said that Jesus is “more powerful” than him.
 - c. God describes Jesus as His own Son, whom He loves and with whom He is pleased.
2. *Read Mark 1:21-2:17 – In chapters 1 and 2, Jesus shows His authority in different situations (see Mark 1:16-20, 21-22, 23-28, 40-45; 2:1-12). When Jesus speaks or acts, what sort of things happen?*
- He calls people, who immediately drop what they are doing and follow him (Mark 1:16-20).
 - People are astonished because He teaches with authority, and not like their religious leaders (Mark 1:21-22).
 - He rebukes evil spirits, and they leave (Mark 1:23-28).
 - He heals sickness, even the most serious illnesses (Mark 1:29-34, 40-45).
 - He forgives sin (Mark 2:1-12).
 - Later, He raises people from death and casts out demons from people.
3. *Read Mark 2:18-3:6 – Even at this early stage, Jesus divided opinions. Some people were amazed by Him, while others were enraged. What are your early impressions of Jesus?*
- Have a leader read Mark 4:35-41.
 - *What hope of surviving the storm did the disciples have? Almost none. The boat was “nearly swamped” (v. 37). As they woke Jesus, they thought they were sure to drown (v. 38).*
 - *What is so remarkable about the way in which Jesus calms the storm (see Mark 4:39)? He did it by speaking a few simple words to the forces of nature. The fact that Jesus instantly calmed not just the furious wind, but the huge waves as well—even though waves normally persist for hours after the wind dies down—shows that a miracle had taken place.*
 - *Psalm 107 was a familiar Old Testament song praising God for His power over the sea. The disciples would have known it well. As you read it, look for similarities with their experience in Mark 4:35-41.*
- 23** *Others went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters [the disciples were fishermen].*
- 24** *They saw the works of the Lord, His wonderful deeds in the deep [the disciples were eyewitnesses].*
- 25** *For He spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves.*
- 26** *They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths [the storm threatened to sink the boat]; in their peril their courage melted away.*
- 27** *They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end [the disciples were sure they couldn't do anything to save themselves and that they were going to die].*
- 28** *Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble [the disciples cried out to Jesus], and He brought them out of their distress [Jesus delivered the disciples from their predicament].*
- 29** *He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed [this is exactly what Jesus did].*
- 30** *They were glad when it grew calm, and He guided them to their desired haven.*
- 31** *Let them give thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for men.*

- *The song and the story end in two different ways (see Psalm 107:30 and Mark 4:41). Why were the disciples still terrified after the storm had been calmed?* It is one thing to sing a praise song to God for His power over the wind and waves. It is quite another thing to be in a boat with a man who calms the sea and wind with a word—especially when seconds before, you had rudely awakened Him to complain that He didn’t care! The awesome reality of Jesus’ identity was coming home to the disciples.

LISTEN (DVD)

- Mark 4:41 – “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!”
 - It is important to get the identity of Jesus right—otherwise, we’ll relate to Him in the wrong way.
 - Mark reveals the identity of Jesus by showing:
 - His power and authority to teach (Mark 1:21-22)
 - His power and authority over sickness (Mark 1:29-31, 32-34; 3:22)
 - His power and authority over nature (Mark 4:35-41)
 - His power and authority over death (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43)
 - His power and authority to forgive sin (Mark 2:1-12)
 - As God’s Son and God’s only chosen King, Jesus behaves with God’s authority and displays God’s power.

DISCUSS

- *Was there something in particular that stood out or stuck you from the DVD?*
- *What do you think of the evidence Mark gives us?*
- *Jesus’ enemies would have looked for every opportunity to discredit Him. Why didn’t they do so by proving that Jesus didn’t have the power or authority He claimed?* Jesus’ enemies would have exposed Him as a fake if they could—but there are no examples of them even trying to do this. Instead of denying His power, they claimed it came from somewhere else. Jesus had power and authority over evil spirits (e.g., Mark 1:23-28, 34; 2:10-12). The religious leaders who came from Jerusalem to investigate didn’t deny this. Instead, they claimed that His power came from the devil (“Beelzebul”)—an illogical claim that Jesus immediately showed to be wrong (Mark 3:22). The implication is that Jesus’ enemies couldn’t discredit Jesus because the evidence for His power and authority was both too strong and too widely known.
- *What is your view of who Jesus is?*

FOLLOW-UP

Sometime during this next week, I encourage you to read through Mark 3:7-5:43 and answer the 3 questions [here](http://bit.ly/174fOWn) (http://bit.ly/174fOWn).