

Getting to know Jesus better by reading the book of Mark

- Part 1

Many people have different opinions about who Jesus really is and what He is like. The only source of information we can really trust is what the Bible teaches us about Him. There are four gospels in the Bible written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and they tell us about the events that took place when Jesus was living on the earth.

In the next few pages I will take you through the book in the Bible that Mark wrote to see what it tells us about Jesus, who He is and why He came to live on the earth. The left column contains Marks words and the right column my comments and thoughts about what we can learn about Jesus.

**Then Jesus asked them,
"But who do you say I am?"**

Mark 8.29

Produced by Matt Rich

chat@chatnow.org.uk

To discover more about Jesus and how to follow Him go to readnow.org.uk
Or to ask questions privately online with a Christian go to chatnow.org.uk

Mark 1

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 As it is written in the Prophets, "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You." 3 "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.'" 4 John came baptising in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5 Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptised by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. 8 I indeed baptised you with water, but He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

9 It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. 11 Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

12 Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. 13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.

The Bible explains that God is very different to us! There is only one God but He is made up of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. These three are not three Gods but they make up the one true God. Jesus is God the son - or as He is called here, the Son of God.

This is talking about Jesus, who is really mighty and powerful. John is not worthy enough or, pure enough to even act like a servant to Jesus - Jesus is so holy, pure and special. Jesus is going to come and give God the Holy Spirit, to the people who desire to be full of Him - baptise means to be completely covered (inside and out) by something.

As well as being God, Jesus was also fully man - He grew up from a baby to a man in a place called Nazareth. Jesus knows what it is like to be human, he understands how we feel and the things we struggle with. God the Father, up in heaven, is telling us that Jesus is His special Son and that He is pleased with Him. This shows us that Jesus (who is about 30 years old now) was perfect in all He had done during His years of growing up. If Jesus had done anything wrong, if He had sinned just once, God the Father (who is pure) would not tell people He was pleased with Jesus in such a dramatic way - it was like a stamp of approval on Jesus.

Jesus went where the Holy Spirit directed Him to go and did what the Holy Spirit wanted Him to do. Jesus was tempted by the cleverest professional tempter ever! If you have ever been tempted to do something wrong Jesus has been even more tempted than you! In other places in the Bible we read that Jesus never gave into any of the temptations. Jesus has experienced temptation - He knows what it is like and He knows how to not give in to it! He can help you to be strong with the things you are being tempted by. The 40 days of being tempted was so tiring that Jesus was helped back to full strength by angels! The Bible teaches us that Jesus is God but it also shows us that He was fully human too - He became tired and hungry like we do and He was tempted to do wrong, just like we are.

14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 17 Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. 20 And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

21 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. 22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" 26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." 28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

29 Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. 31 So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.

Jesus didn't just walk around saying "I love everyone", He did come to show us His love, but He was also saying, "God's kingdom is here" - meaning, I'm here bringing God's kingdom with me, so now you need to repent (say sorry for going your own way and have a complete change of heart and aim) and believe in the great message I bring. He loved people enough to come to this earth to tell them they needed to change and trust in Him as their king and ruler.

There must have been something really special about Jesus for people to stop what they were doing and be prepared to have a complete change of life by following Jesus with everything they had and were!

Jesus knows his stuff! He understood the Scriptures and taught it with clarity and power - people were amazed by what He knew, how He explained it and the way that He brought it to life!

Here we see evil spirits telling people that Jesus is special (these used to be good angels at one time so they knew Jesus from before when they used to be up in heaven with Him). They know that He has the power to destroy evil spirits - and that Jesus is not just a man but He is the Holy God.

Jesus has all power over the works of the devil and his demons - they have to stop what they are doing and leave when He decides to say the word! This man must have been so pleased to be set free - no matter what we are struggling with Jesus can set us free too.

Jesus, the mighty powerful teacher had time for His new friend's wife's mother! Women weren't seen as at all important in those days by most people - so for Jesus to be interested in a lady so far removed from Him would have been seen as really radical! Jesus cares for everyone not just people who are special or important! He left what He was doing and went to this sick lady and showed His care and power to put everything right!

32 At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

36 And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. 37 When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." 38 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." 39 And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.

40 Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." 41 Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."

42 As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.

43 And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, 44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

Mark 2

1 And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. 2 Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them.

3 Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men.

Jesus showed them that the Kingdom of God was now touching their lives with all these demonstrations of power - healing people and defeating the evil one where he was involved in their lives.

Jesus thought that making time to spend with His Father in heaven was so important that He made space for it in a busy schedule - if Jesus thinks this is important to do then so should we.

Jesus loved people and wanted more people to hear the great news He was bringing - it was for many, not just for a few.

A leper was someone who had a very contagious disease and because of this they were made to live away from people so that the disease wouldn't spread. Jesus showed that He loved those that are seen as the outcasts, the untouchables in society. Jesus helped this man and was willing to touch him and risk making Himself appear to be dirty, unclean and infected by the troubles of this man.

Jesus was really popular and He loved to explain to people about following God and His kingdom.

People trusted Jesus to help them even with impossible situations.

4 And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." 6 And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves,

He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, 11 "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." 12 Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

13 Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them.

14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.

5 Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. 16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Jesus knows what is going on inside our hearts, our thoughts, our minds - we can't hide anything from Him. We can't trick Him into thinking we are something or someone we aren't. He knows what is really going on inside of us.

Jesus wanted to show them that He was God and could forgive people the bad things they do - He proved that He could bring forgiveness - heal internal things (things that you can't see) by showing an external healing that everyone could see. We are often more interested in the outward things that worry us but Jesus is much more interested in the inside / secret things within us that make us the kind of person that we are. Here we also see that Jesus can forgive us for everything that we have ever done wrong - just with one simple word! The man did not need to do lots of good deeds to earn Jesus' forgiveness, Jesus just gave it to him as a loving free gift!

The main thing Jesus continually wanted to do was teach the people He cared about - He wanted them to know and understand what God was really like.

Just like before with the uneducated fisherman, this educated accountant chose to follow Jesus and stop what he was doing. This man was hated by everyone because he collected taxes on behalf of the Romans who were not liked by the Jewish people. Jesus came to help both the popular people and those that people don't like - we all need Him to help us.

Jesus wanted to help those who realised they were in need of His help. Even unpopular people that good people normally tried to avoid. But notice that Jesus didn't just say, "There, there I love you it's all okay" - He showed them love and care but told them they needed to repent - to change, to turn around from living for themselves in their bad ways and begin to live for God instead.

18 The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days. 21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins."

23 Now it happened that He went through the grain fields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: 26 how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?" 27 And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

Mark 3

And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. 2 So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. 3 And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward." 4 Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent.

5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

Jesus is explaining that something new and different is here now - He was talking about Himself. He is saying this because, before He came along, following God was mainly about obeying this rule and that rule, but Jesus brought a new way - a way of living in a relationship with Him based on complete forgiveness of your failure to keep the rules.

Here again we can see that the religious leaders at the time (the Pharisees) wanted the rules to be followed but Jesus disciples (who were Jews and knew what was wrong according to the religious rules) had learnt that pleasing God was about what was in your heart not the outward actions you did. They were following Jesus as their master and king, they were living their lives for Him and not for themselves - Jesus was allowing them to do things differently to the old religious way of doing things. He was like a new piece of garment, or a new wineskin - bringing in a new way, where it was possible now to know God's love and favour, even though we don't deserve it, because knowing Jesus and following Him brings forgiveness and undeserved love and favour.

Jesus was not just spiritual He was also very clever and wise - He knew that these people were looking for an excuse to trick Him and accuse Him - Jesus could have just avoided the situation but He really wanted to help the man who had a physical disability.

Jesus had emotions like us - but, unlike us, His anger was always holy anger! We usually sin when we get angry but He didn't! He was angry that these religious rulers cared more for rules than for people.

7 But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea 8 and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. 9 So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him.

10 For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. 11 And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God." 12 But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.

13 And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. 14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, 15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: 16 Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; 17 James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder"; 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; 19 and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.

20 Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 21 But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind." 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons." 23 So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. 27 No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house."

This shows us just how popular and good at caring for people Jesus was - so many people wanted to be as close as possible to Him that He might have been hurt.

These evil spirits knew the truth about who Jesus was - The Son of God. This is probably thought of best as a description of His character / nature rather than meaning He is the offspring of God - it means Jesus has the same nature as God, He was just like God - because He is God. eg James and John were called sons of thunder - this was a description of their character not a description of what their parents were like! In other places in the Bible it explains that people at the time thought that to be called Son of God was blasphemous because it was like calling yourself the same as God!

Jesus wanted others to do His work as well as Him doing it - this is what He also wants from those that follow Him today too!

People couldn't deny that Jesus was powerful and supernatural in what He could do, so some began to think maybe He was using evil powers to do things. Jesus explained that His supernatural powers are holy and good.

28 “Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; 29 but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation”— 30 because they said, “He has an unclean spirit.” 31 Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. 32 And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.”

33 But He answered them, saying, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” 34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”

Mark 4

1 And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.

2 Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: 3 “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. 5 Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. 6 But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. 7 And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. 8 But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.” 9 And He said to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

10 But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable.

1 And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, 12 so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.’”

Jesus had a real family that He was brought up in. His earthly (step)father, Joseph, had already died by this point in His life but His mother, Mary, and brothers were still alive and had come to get Jesus because they wanted Him for something. Jesus' father at some point before this time had died, Jesus knows what it is like to see someone you really love die - He knows, He understands and He can help.

Jesus is explaining here that our life is not just about earthly things, He also has a spiritual family - those that follow Him are part of His spiritual family and He loves them as if they were a close physical family.

Jesus was a great teacher - He taught inspiring things that people really wanted to hear. They found what He had to say fascinating and radical. Some people think that Christianity is boring and restrictive but really it is exciting and freeing!

Jesus was obviously a very approachable leader - His followers felt at ease with Him. Even though they weren't clever, educated men they knew that if they asked Jesus questions then He would explain things to them in ways they could understand and grasp.

13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. 16 These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. 18 Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, 19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

21 Also He said to them, "Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lamp stand? 22 For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

24 Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. 25 For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

26 And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, 27 and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. 28 For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

In this story and in the next 2 stories Jesus is teaching them about being one of His followers - being a Christ-ian as they were later called - in this first story Jesus tells them that some people who hear about Him will choose to follow Him but most people who hear won't choose to follow Him and they won't follow for a number of different reasons.

In this story Jesus is encouraging His followers to live open lives - not to hide what they believe from others - but just to live it as it is, tell it as it is - let people see the difference following Jesus makes to their lives. This is how we should live today - we should let those around us see that it is a natural part of our life and it effects all of our life - we don't need to hide it.

Jesus is now explaining that those who follow Him here on earth, those who have gained Him in their lives, will be given even more in the life that is to come (after we die) - but those who don't follow Jesus, who don't have Him in their lives, will experience even the little they have (ie life on this earth without Jesus) taken from them when they die and they will go somewhere to suffer with even less.

Jesus is teaching that we are to sow seeds (seeds of truth - telling people about Him and His gospel) even though we don't know what the soil is like (we don't know if people we tell will believe us and turn to Jesus or not) and He will make some of the seed grow (some of the truths we tell about Jesus will change them so they want to follow Him) and we will see them turn to follow Jesus. We shouldn't worry about how God will change them and open their eyes to see the truth about Him - that is God's business! We are simply meant to not hide what we know and instead sow what we know so that it can grow inside others who hear and see.

30 Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? 31 It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; 32 but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."

33 And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. 34 But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.

35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." 36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

Mark 5

1 So they arrived at the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gerasenes. 2 When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out from a cemetery to meet him. 3 This man lived among the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. 4 Whenever he was put into chains and shackles - as he often was - he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones. 6 When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him, ran to meet him, and bowed low

Jesus' Kingdom started small but was not going to stay small - look at how big it is today - it's incredible to think that it all began with those first few followers.

We need to remember that quite a few of Jesus' followers were fishermen - so they were used to boats and wind and rough seas! So this must have been something particularly frightening! On this journey there were a number of boats in danger and the waves were coming over the sides of the boats so they thought they were going to sink - and Jesus was fast asleep during it all. Sometimes in our life we feel that if Jesus was awake (aware of what we were going through) then He would stop it all for us - we feel we want to wake Him up and say to Him, "I can't cope, I'm drowning".

We need to remember that Jesus is all powerful and He loves us very much and He is in the storm with us... we might feel that He has abandoned us but He hasn't and wants us to have faith in the storm - trusting in His care even though we feel afraid. We must remember that Jesus is always with His followers in the storm and there is always hope! And if He decides it is best for us He can easily say the word and the storm will stop.

His followers were just beginning to understand that Jesus was not just an amazing teacher and healer - but was in fact God walking on the earth with them - with power over the wind and the waves!

Jesus was not afraid of even extremely difficult people. Most people avoided this man but Jesus let this man come close. Jesus was pure and holy but He still wanted to help those in need. The evil spirit who was making this man a wild person knew who Jesus was and knew Jesus had all power to punish even evil spirits.

before him. 7 With a shriek, he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don't torture me!" 8 For Jesus had already said to the spirit, "Come out of the man, you evil spirit."

9 Then Jesus demanded, "What is your name?" And he replied, "My name is Legion, because there are many of us inside this man." 10 Then the evil spirits begged him again and again not to send them to some distant place. 11 There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby. 12 "Send us into those pigs," the spirits begged. "Let us enter them." 13 So Jesus gave them permission. The evil spirits came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the entire herd of about 2,000 pigs plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water. 14 The herdsmen fled to the nearby town and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news as they ran. People rushed out to see what had happened. 15 A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid.

16 Then those who had seen what happened told the others about the demon-possessed man and the pigs. 17 And the crowd began pleading with Jesus to go away and leave them alone.

18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. 19 But Jesus said, "No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been." 20 So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them.

21 Jesus got into the boat again and went back to the other side of the lake, where a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. 22 Then a leader of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, arrived. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet, 23 pleading fervently with him. "My little daughter is dying," he said. "Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so she can live." 24 Jesus went with him, and all the people followed, crowding around him.

The people were originally afraid of the man, then when the man was healed and free they became scared of the power that Jesus had!

The people were so afraid of Jesus' power they wanted nothing to do with Him. When Jesus was around there never seemed to be people who were neutral towards Him. People loved Him and wanted to be with Him or they hated Him and wanted to get away from Him.

Jesus chooses to use someone, who has been a mess for years, to do things for Him. Did this man understand everything about Jesus? No. Had this man proved that he was worthy of doing God's work? No. But Jesus used Him anyway - he had a story to tell and could tell people what he knew of Jesus - we can all do that.

Jesus had time for big crowds, but He was also interested in one child that needed His help. None of us are too small and insignificant for Jesus.

25 A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding. 26 She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact, she had gotten worse. 27 She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his robe. 28 For she thought to herself, "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed." 29 Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition. 30 Jesus realised at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my robe?" 31 His disciples said to him, "Look at this crowd pressing around you. How can you ask, 'Who touched me?'" 32 But he kept on looking around to see who had done it. 33 Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realisation of what had happened to her, came and fell to her knees in front of him and told him what she had done. 34 And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over."

35 While he was still speaking to her, messengers arrived from the home of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. They told him, "Your daughter is dead. There's no use troubling the Teacher now." 36 But Jesus overheard them and said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Just have faith."

37 Then Jesus stopped the crowd and wouldn't let anyone go with him except Peter, James, and John (the brother of James). 38 When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw much commotion and weeping and wailing. 39 He went inside and asked, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child isn't dead; she's only asleep."

40 The crowd laughed at him. But he made them all leave, and he took the girl's father and mother and his three disciples into the room where the girl was lying. 41 Holding her hand, he said to her, "Talitha koum," which means "Little girl, get up!" 42 And the girl, who was twelve years old, immediately stood up and walked around! They were overwhelmed and totally amazed. 43 Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell anyone what had happened, and then he told them to give her something to eat.

Even when Jesus was busy, He made time for someone in need - He is never too busy to help and care - His love never runs out, it goes on and on.

Jesus is not worried about impossible situations - He knows that nothing is impossible! Also we can learn from this that one person does not miss out on God's blessing and help because someone else has got to it first. Jesus doesn't work like that - He doesn't have to only help the more worthy cases. He never runs out of love and the ability to help, His resources never come to an end.

Sometime people think that Jesus does not know what He is talking about - that He doesn't understand, He just doesn't get it! But Jesus ALWAYS understands, He always knows what is going on and He always gets it right and tells it how it really is.

Jesus can do the impossible, He can bring things that are dead back to life. The situation you are in is not too hard for Jesus to fix. If He can do this thing we have just read then we need to trust Him, that He can do anything! The Bible tells us that if we love Jesus then He will make sure that everything works together for our good. If Jesus don't fix your situation then it is because at the moment He wants to walk with you through that situation.

Mark 6

1 Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. 2 The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

They asked, "Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?" 3 Then they scoffed, "He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us."

They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him. 4 Then Jesus told them, "A prophet is honoured everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family." 5 And because of their unbelief, he couldn't do any miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6 And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then Jesus went from village to village, teaching the people. 7 And he called his twelve disciples together and began sending them out two by two, giving them authority to cast out evil spirits. 8 He told them to take nothing for their journey except a walking stick—no food, no traveller's bag, no money. 9 He allowed them to wear sandals but not to take a change of clothes. 10 "Wherever you go," he said, "stay in the same house until you leave town. 11 But if any place refuses to welcome you or listen to you, shake its dust from your feet as you leave to show that you have abandoned those people to their fate."

12 So the disciples went out, telling everyone they met to repent of their sins and turn to God. 13 And they cast out many demons and healed many sick people, anointing them with olive oil.

14 Herod Antipas, the king, soon heard about Jesus, because everyone was talking about him. Some were saying, "This must be John the Baptist raised from the dead. That is why he can do such miracles." 15 Others said, "He's the prophet Elijah." Still others said, "He's a prophet like the other great prophets of the past."

Jesus was a great teacher because He knew what He was talking about - none of the Bible was confusing to Him like it sometimes is to us. He knew exactly why it said what it did and exactly what it meant because He had inspired the writers to write what they'd put in the Bible. He can help us to understand it too today!

Jesus didn't just suddenly appear from heaven - like an angel - He had been brought up in the area where He now, was - they knew Him as a child, they watched Him play, they had spent time with Him and His family while He was growing up. Yes He is God but He was also very much a human being too!

Jesus healed people for a purpose, He wanted them to feel better but He also wanted people to see the miracles and believe He was the Messiah, the anointed one, the one who they were expecting to come and rescue them and save them. So when they didn't want to even consider this to be true He only healed a few and then moved on.

Jesus liked to work through other people, He didn't want people to believe in Him in such a manner that it didn't make a difference to their lives. He wanted His followers to act like they knew God for themselves and for them to do the things He wanted them to do - even if they seemed like hard things to do. Jesus wants the same for us today - to act on what we believe. What we believe about Jesus should show itself to others around us through how we live and the decisions we make.

Many people today have different ideas about who Jesus is - some people think he was a religious teacher, others think he was a fraud, others that He never really existed - we all need to decide who Jesus is from what the Bible teaches - not simply our own ideas and thoughts. Then we will discover that Jesus is God.

16 When Herod heard about Jesus, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has come back from the dead." 17 For Herod had sent soldiers to arrest and imprison John as a favour to Herodias. She had been his brother Philip's wife, but Herod had married her. 18 John had been telling Herod, "It is against God's law for you to marry your brother's wife." 19 So Herodias bore a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But without Herod's approval she was powerless, 20 for Herod respected John; and knowing that he was a good and holy man, he protected him. Herod was greatly disturbed whenever he talked with John, but even so, he liked to listen to him.

21 Herodias's chance finally came on Herod's birthday. He gave a party for his high government officials, army officers, and the leading citizens of Galilee. 22 Then his daughter, also named Herodias, came in and performed a dance that greatly pleased Herod and his guests. "Ask me for anything you like," the king said to the girl, "and I will give it to you." 23 He even vowed, "I will give you whatever you ask, up to half my kingdom!". 24 She went out and asked her mother, "What should I ask for?" Her mother told her, "Ask for the head of John the Baptist!" 25 So the girl hurried back to the king and told him, "I want the head of John the Baptist, right now, on a tray!". 26 Then the king deeply regretted what he had said; but because of the vows he had made in front of his guests, he couldn't refuse her. 27 So he immediately sent an executioner to the prison to cut off John's head and bring it to him. The soldier beheaded John in the prison, 28 brought his head on a tray, and gave it to the girl, who took it to her mother. 29 When John's disciples heard what had happened, they came to get his body and buried it in a tomb.

30 The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught. 31 Then Jesus said, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile." He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat.

32 So they left by boat for a quiet place, where they could be alone. 33 But many people recognised them and saw them leaving, and people from many towns ran ahead along the shore and got there ahead of them. 34 Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

Jesus is not only interested in the spiritual, He is also interested in our physical needs. He understands what it is to be a human, to be tired, to feel weary, to need a rest, a break. Jesus doesn't look down on us because we need these things. Here it is His suggestion that they all took some time out from the good things they were doing.

Jesus had compassion on them because they didn't have anyone to show them the way, they were lost and confused without direction in their lives - He wanted to help them to know which way to go in life.

35 Late in the afternoon his disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. 36 Send the crowds away so they can go to the nearby farms and villages and buy something to eat." 37 But Jesus said, "You feed them."

"With what?" they asked. "We'd have to work for months to earn enough money to buy food for all these people!"

38 "How much bread do you have?" he asked. "Go and find out." They came back and reported, "We have five loaves of bread and two fish." 39 Then Jesus told the disciples to have the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of fifty or a hundred. 41 Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread to the disciples so they could distribute it to the people. He also divided the fish for everyone to share. 42 They all ate as much as they wanted, 43 and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftover bread and fish. 44 A total of 5,000 men and their families were fed from those loaves!

45 Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and head across the lake to Bethsaida, while he sent the people home. 46 After telling everyone good-bye, he went up into the hills by himself to pray.

47 Late that night, the disciples were in their boat in the middle of the lake, and Jesus was alone on land. 48 He saw that they were in serious trouble, rowing hard and struggling against the wind and waves. About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water.

He intended to go past them, 49 but when they saw him walking on the water, they cried out in terror, thinking he was a ghost. 50 They were all terrified when they saw him.

But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage! I am here!" 51 Then he climbed into the boat, and the wind stopped.

Jesus likes to challenge us too. Here He is stretching the faith of the disciples - what will they do with this instruction?

The disciples could still only see things in the practical, physical sense - even though they had just experienced God doing miracles through them when they went out in twos. It is very easy for us to keep focusing back on what we know is practically achievable, but Jesus wants us to trust Him more and understand that with Him, anything is possible!

Jesus can take the small that we have to offer Him and use us to do so much more than we could ever imagine - but it begins with us being willing to offer it to Him and then working with Him as He works through us. None of us has too little to offer, no matter how big the thing in front of us is that needs to be done.

Making time away from people and the business of the day to talk to God is so important, it is not a luxury extra, it is part of what we were created to do.

It's never too late for Jesus to help us, He is never too far away or unable to be there when we need Him!

It looks like Jesus may be playing a joke with them, he is coming to help them but also having fun at the same time - looking to see how they would react to a man walking on water, a man doing the impossible and about to walk past them!

When we realise that Jesus is with us - and He can do anything and that He will work all things together for our good - then we can find peace as we know that He cares for us and He is with us and we are not alone in the storm we are going through. Peter walked on water while the storm was still raging. His fear had turned to peace even in the middle of the storm - Jesus can do that for you too.

They were totally amazed, 52 for they still didn't understand the significance of the miracle of the loaves. Their hearts were too hard to take it in.

53 After they had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret. They brought the boat to shore 54 and climbed out. The people recognised Jesus at once, 55 and they ran throughout the whole area, carrying sick people on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 Wherever he went - in villages, cities, or the countryside - they brought the sick out to the marketplaces. They begged him to let the sick touch at least the fringe of his robe, and all who touched him were healed.

Mark 7

One day some Pharisees and teachers of religious law arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus. 2 They noticed that some of his disciples failed to follow the Jewish ritual of hand washing before eating.

3 The Jews, especially the Pharisees, do not eat until they have poured water over their cupped hands, as required by their ancient traditions. 4 Similarly, they don't eat anything from the market until they immerse their hands in water. This is but one of many traditions they have clung to - such as their ceremonial washing of cups, pitchers, and kettles.

5 So the Pharisees and teachers of religious law asked him, "Why don't your disciples follow our age-old tradition? They eat without first performing the hand-washing ceremony." 6 Jesus replied, "You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you,

for he wrote, 'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 7 Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.' 8 For you ignore God's law and substitute your own tradition."

9 Then he said, "You skilfully sidestep God's law in order to hold on to your own tradition. 10 For instance, Moses gave you this law from God: 'Honour your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.' 11 But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, 'Sorry, I can't help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.' 12 In this way, you let them disregard their needy parents. 13 And so you cancel the word of God in order to hand down your own tradition. And this is only one example among many others."

If Jesus was walking around on the earth today - people would still be rushing to Him) 56 Wherever he went - in villages, cities, or the countryside - they brought the sick out to the marketplaces. They begged him to let the sick touch at least the fringe of his robe, and all who touched him were healed.

Jesus' way wasn't a religious way full of religious rules and laws to follow. He was much more real and down to earth in the ways He wanted people to follow Him.

Some churches, that still call themselves Christian churches, also add many extra man made rules to try and put things in place that seem best to them - but sadly, often these rules end up being more important than what the Bible says Jesus taught!

Jesus knew the Bible really well and because He was the God that has inspired the writings He knew how to use it to show people the error of their ways. The Bible also shows us where we are wrong and need to change our ideas and actions - we need to read it to learn from it.

We need to make sure that we don't just sing songs about worshipping God when we don't mean the words from our heart. It is easy to say, "I want Jesus to be my King", but it is important that we choose to live with Him as our King as well as say it. What we say and do should not just be for show but it should be what we believe in our heart.

Jesus explains that our faith should show itself in actions of kindness and love to those around us and close to us.

14 Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. "All of you listen," he said, "and try to understand. 15 It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart."

17 Then Jesus went into a house to get away from the crowd, and his disciples asked him what he meant by the parable he had just used. 18 "Don't you understand either?" he asked. "Can't you see that the food you put into your body cannot defile you? 19 Food doesn't go into your heart, but only passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer." (By saying this, he declared that every kind of food is acceptable in God's eyes.)

20 And then he added, "It is what comes from inside that defiles you. 21 For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. 23 All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you."

24 Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre. He didn't want anyone to know which house he was staying in, but he couldn't keep it a secret. 25 Right away a woman who had heard about him came and fell at his feet. Her little girl was possessed by an evil spirit, 26 and she begged him to cast out the demon from her daughter. Since she was a Gentile, born in Syrian Phoenicia, 27 Jesus told her, "First I should feed the children—my own family, the Jews. It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs."

28 She replied, "That's true, Lord, but even the dogs under the table are allowed to eat the scraps from the children's plates." 29 "Good answer!" he said. "Now go home, for the demon has left your daughter." 30 And when she arrived home, she found her little girl lying quietly in bed, and the demon was gone.

31 Jesus left Tyre and went up to Sidon before going back to the Sea of Galilee and the region of the Ten Towns.

Jesus is interested in the truth that is deep inside of us - what we really believe - not what we pretend on the outside. That is because God is not deceived by our outward actions and words because He sees us for who we really are and what we really think - He knows us completely we can't fool Him.

It is very easy to do religious actions to make people think we are a Christian but God is not fooled by these things - He knows what is going on inside.

Here we see some of the things that we need not to be, things we should have a desire to get rid of from our lives - it's not just the things we do, it's also the things we think!

In those days Jewish people didn't mix with people from other races, they thought that other races were bad as they were not God's chosen people like the Jews were. Jesus came as a Jew and He mainly ministered to the Jewish people but from time to time we see Him doing what was considered wrong - like here where He is happy to spend time with a Gentile (someone who isn't a Jew). He teases her by calling her a dog who wants the crumbs.

This lady showed Jesus that she was serious in her desire for Him to help - she knew that He would also be interested and kind to those who weren't Jews. She knew that His love and concern was for people of all nations. She showed Him her determination to be helped and He rewarded her for being so persistent and not being put off. You may feel you do not deserve Jesus' love or kindness or help - and you would be right - but Jesus gives it to those who don't deserve it.

32 A deaf man with a speech impediment was brought to him, and the people begged Jesus to lay his hands on the man to heal him. 33 Jesus led him away from the crowd so they could be alone. He put his fingers into the man's ears. Then, spitting on his own fingers, he touched the man's tongue. 34 Looking up to heaven, he sighed and said, "Ephphatha," which means, "Be opened!" 35 Instantly the man could hear perfectly, and his tongue was freed so he could speak plainly!

36 Jesus told the crowd not to tell anyone, but the more he told them not to, the more they spread the news. 37 They were completely amazed and said again and again, "Everything he does is wonderful. He even makes the deaf to hear and gives speech to those who cannot speak."

Mark 8

About this time another large crowd had gathered, and the people ran out of food again. Jesus called his disciples and told them, 2 "I feel sorry for these people.

They have been here with me for three days, and they have nothing left to eat. 3 If I send them home hungry, they will faint along the way. For some of them have come a long distance." 4 His disciples replied, "How are we supposed to find enough food to feed them out here in the wilderness?"

5 Jesus asked, "How much bread do you have?", "Seven loaves," they replied. 6 So Jesus told all the people to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves, thanked God for them, and broke them into pieces. He gave them to his disciples, who distributed the bread to the crowd.

7 A few small fish were found, too, so Jesus also blessed these and told the disciples to distribute them. 8 They ate as much as they wanted. Afterward, the disciples picked up seven large baskets of leftover food.

9 There were about 4,000 people in the crowd that day, and Jesus sent them home after they had eaten. 10 Immediately after this, he got into a boat with his disciples and crossed over to the region of Dalmanutha.

Nothing is impossible for Jesus to do! Jesus didn't just heal people to look good, or to get lots of attention. He wasn't a show off, even though He had every right to be one! Jesus took this man to one side to help Him. Jesus cares about all of us as individuals too - He knows what we need, He knows how we feel, He knows and He cares and He is gentle and kind towards us. When we need His help in a quiet, private way Jesus understands.

Everything Jesus does is wonderful - this is still true today and He is on our side all of the time, even prepared to give His life willingly to rescue us from the punishment that we deserve because of the bad things we do!

Jesus had a real desire to help people with their needs - he didn't ignore them, he felt sorry for them and wanted to help.

At this point Jesus could have said, "come on guys - get with it! You know I did this once before! He could have been cross with them for not just getting on with what was needed - but He didn't and He wasn't. Jesus is gentle with us even when we get things wrong time after time!

Jesus didn't just do all of the miracle himself - He got his followers involved. They could have just said, "there is no way I am taking this small amount of bread out there to give to so many people", but instead they trusted that Jesus knew what He was doing and they did exactly what He said to do. We need to be like the disciples and follow what Jesus tells us in the Bible and trust that He knows what He is talking about.

Jesus is not restricted by the laws of nature and what should be impossible is easy for Him to do - even today!

11 When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had arrived, they came and started to argue with him. Testing him, they demanded that he show them a miraculous sign from heaven to prove his authority. 12 When he heard this, he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why do these people keep demanding a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, I will not give this generation any such sign." 13 So he got back into the boat and left them, and he crossed to the other side of the lake. 14 But the disciples had forgotten to bring any food. They had only one loaf of bread with them in the boat. 15 As they were crossing the lake, Jesus warned them, "Watch out! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod."

16 At this they began to argue with each other because they hadn't brought any bread. 17 Jesus knew what they were saying, so he said, "Why are you arguing about having no bread? Don't you know or understand even yet? Are your hearts too hard to take it in? 18 'You have eyes - can't you see? You have ears - can't you hear?' Don't you remember anything at all? 19 When I fed the 5,000 with five loaves of bread, how many baskets of leftovers did you pick up afterward?" "Twelve," they said. 20 "And when I fed the 4,000 with seven loaves, how many large baskets of leftovers did you pick up?" "Seven," they said. 21 "Don't you understand yet?" he asked them.

22 When they arrived at Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man to Jesus, and they begged him to touch the man and heal him. 23 Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. Then, spitting on the man's eyes, he laid his hands on him and asked, "Can you see anything now?" 24 The man looked around. "Yes," he said, "I see people, but I can't see them very clearly. They look like trees walking around." 25 Then Jesus placed his hands on the man's eyes again, and his eyes were opened. His sight was completely restored, and he could see everything clearly. 26 Jesus sent him away, saying, "Don't go back into the village on your way home."

27 Jesus and his disciples left Galilee and went up to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. As they were walking along, he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" 28 "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other prophets."

Jesus knew that these people were just testing Him and that they were not really interested in the answer - they had no desire to believe in Him for themselves. All they wanted to do was cause problems and spread doubts. We need to be aware that sometimes people are just trying to argue with us about Jesus too - trying to prove that we shouldn't believe in Him. There are times when we need to answer them fully and other times when we just need to gently agree to disagree with them, having only answered a few of the points they have raised.

The disciples seemed to have their focus only on the physical things around them - Jesus wanted them to focus more on what was happening spiritually around them. When Matthew retells this story in his book he finishes it like this - "then the disciples understood that Jesus did not tell them to beware of the yeast in the bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees". We need to make sure we don't just focus on the things we can see and touch when real life is about much more than just those things.

Here we have an example of Jesus healing a man just because He cared for him. Jesus took him away from all the people in the village and after healing him told him to go home without going back to the village. Jesus didn't do this miracle so everyone could see it and say, "wow!". He did it because He wanted to help the man. Sometimes Jesus helps us in a very public way and other times it is just between Jesus and us.

People couldn't just ignore Jesus and have no opinion about Him, but many people had different ideas about who He really was. Today people still have different opinions about who Jesus really is and what He is like. The only source of information we know we can really trust is what the Bible teaches us about Him. There are four gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and they tell us about the events that took place when Jesus was living on the earth. - It is by reading about Him in these that we can get to know the real Jesus for ourselves.

29 Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah." 30 But Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

31 Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. 32 As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things.

33 Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. "Get away from me, Satan!" he said. "You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."

34 Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. 35 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.

36 And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? 37 Is anything worth more than your soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

The messiah was the title of the person that the Jewish people had been waiting for - the person who was going to rescue them and set them free. Many people were expecting the Messiah to be a military leader who would come and set them free from those countries that were controlling them. But Jesus came as a different kind of Messiah - He came to set them free spiritually - to rescue them from the punishment they deserved for the bad things they had each done. The Bible explains that one day Jesus will come again to this earth a second time, and when He does He will be the big powerful leader that many were waiting for the first time.

Jesus knew why He was here, He knew what He had come to do, what His mission was - He had come to die on the cross to take our place and our punishment so that we could be forgiven and go free and know God in the way that we were created to. He began to explain these things to His disciples so that they would understand what was going on when it happened - but it was too confusing for them and hard for them to process because they wanted Jesus to stay with them and not suffer in this way.

Jesus wants us all to look at things from God's perspective not from our own very restricted point of view. Sometimes, like Peter, we may think, "how can this possibly be what Jesus wants for me - there's no way this is good for me" but God can see things clearly and He never gets it wrong and He never wastes anything that we go through.

If we want to follow Jesus - if we want to be a Christian - then we need to squash down our own ideas and plans for what we want to do in life and what we want to achieve and what is important to us - and focus on what Jesus wants our aims and objectives and plans to be. We need to put first in our lives the things that He says are important, things like loving others, caring for the poor, growing in our relationship with God, desiring to promote the good news about Jesus so that others will know God's forgiveness etc. Sometimes we will then also do the things we were planning to do anyway but other times God will give us new, different plans for our lives. We need to consider our own selfish desires as something to be put down and killed off and instead seek to follow Jesus as the most important thing - with Him as our King.

Here Jesus mentions that He will be returning to this earth at a future time and that when He comes again He will not come as a servant, wanting to die on a cross to rescue us from our sins - but instead He will come in power and bright glory with an army of angels!

Mark 9

Jesus went on to say, "I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Kingdom of God arrive in great power!" 2 Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed, 3 and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them.

Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus. 5 Peter exclaimed, "Rabbi, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials - one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 He said this because he didn't really know what else to say, for they were all terrified.

7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him."

8 Suddenly, when they looked around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them. 9 As they went back down the mountain, he told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept it to themselves, but they often asked each other what he meant by "rising from the dead."

11 Then they asked him, "Why do the teachers of religious law insist that Elijah must return before the Messiah comes?" 12 Jesus responded, "Elijah is indeed coming first to get everything ready. Yet why do the Scriptures say that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be treated with utter contempt? 13 But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they chose to abuse him, just as the Scriptures predicted."

14 When they returned to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd surrounding them, and some teachers of religious law were arguing with them. 15 When the crowd saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with awe, and they ran to greet him.

It must have been amazing to see this. Three of Jesus' closest friends were allowed to see a brief snapshot of what Jesus was like before He came from Heaven and what He is like again now that He is back in heaven. They got to see Jesus as God with all the white brightness of purity and holiness. Jesus was very much a real man on the earth, a working man - a trained carpenter but he was also God on the earth.

This is very similar to what happened when Jesus was baptised at the start of his time as a spiritual teacher and leader. God the Father, who is in Heaven, is stating again that Jesus is God the Son and that we need to listen to what he is teaching.

Jesus only showed His real splendour to a few people. If He had shown this all of the time then the people would have not allowed Him to be killed on the cross and He needed to do that to take the punishment we deserved so we could be forgiven.

Normal, everyday people weren't afraid of Jesus, they didn't think of Him as a great man who they shouldn't get close to because He was too important for them - quite the opposite, they all wanted to get close to Jesus and be around Him and watch Him and get to know Him.

16 "What is all this arguing about?" Jesus asked.
17 One of the men in the crowd spoke up and said, "Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him. He is possessed by an evil spirit that won't let him talk. 18 And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but they couldn't do it." 19 Jesus said to them, "You faithless people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

20 So they brought the boy. But when the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the child into a violent convulsion, and he fell to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth. 21 "How long has this been happening?" Jesus asked the boy's father. He replied, "Since he was a little boy. 22 The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him. Have mercy on us and help us, if you can." 23 "What do you mean, 'if I can'?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes." 24 The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!"

25 When Jesus saw that the crowd of onlookers was growing, he rebuked the evil spirit. "Listen, you spirit that makes this boy unable to hear and speak," he said. "I command you to come out of this child and never enter him again!" 26 Then the spirit screamed and threw the boy into another violent convulsion and left him. The boy appeared to be dead. A murmur ran through the crowd as people said, "He's dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to his feet, and he stood up. 28 Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, "Why couldn't we cast out that evil spirit?" 29 Jesus replied, "This kind can be cast out only by prayer."

30 Leaving that region, they travelled through Galilee. Jesus didn't want anyone to know he was there, 31 for he wanted to spend more time with his disciples and teach them.

He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. He will be killed, but three days later he will rise from the dead." 32 They didn't understand what he was saying, however, and they were afraid to ask him what he meant.

Jesus wants us to be strong in our faith - but even when we aren't strong and we fail, Jesus doesn't leave us to fail, He very kindly and graciously gets involved in helping us out and sorting things out in the way that is best for us.

Sometimes we may feel that we can't trust Jesus with a problem that seems so big and complicated. We may think, "I wish He could help me, but I don't think I can really believe He will bother with me as I'm not important and don't deserve it". We may want to trust Him with the situation, but be really struggling to do so. When we are like this we need to be like this man and say... I do believe and trust you Jesus, but help me with my doubts".

Jesus still helped the man and his son - even though the man had doubts. Jesus doesn't wait for us to be perfect and sorted before He helps us. He loves us too much and knows we are often weak and useless at getting things right and trusting Him like we should.

Jesus cared about individuals as well as the big crowds. His disciples often got things wrong and made mistakes - They often lacked the faith they needed and let Jesus down. But Jesus still planned to do great things through them, He spent time helping them to understand the things they needed to grasp so they could do what He wanted them to do next.

Jesus knew why He was here, He knew what He had come to do, what His mission was - He had come to die on the cross to take our place and our punishment so that we could be forgiven and go free and know God in the way that we were created to. He began to explain these things to His disciples so that they would understand what was going on when it happened - but it was too confusing for them and hard for them to process because they wanted Jesus to stay with them and not suffer in this way.

33 After they arrived at Capernaum and settled in a house, Jesus asked his disciples, "What were you discussing out on the road?"

34 But they didn't answer, because they had been arguing about which of them was the greatest. 35 He sat down, called the twelve disciples over to him, and said, "Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else."

36 Then he put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not only me but also my Father who sent me."

38 John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he wasn't in our group." 39 "Don't stop him!" Jesus said. "No one who performs a miracle in my name will soon be able to speak evil of me. 40 Anyone who is not against us is for us. 41 If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah, I tell you the truth, that person will surely be rewarded.

42 "But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone hung around your neck. 43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It's better to enter eternal life with only one hand than to go into the unquenchable fires of hell with two hands. 45 If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It's better to enter eternal life with only one foot than to be thrown into hell with two feet. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out. It's better to enter the Kingdom of God with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48 'where the maggots never die and the fire never goes out.' 49 "For everyone will be tested with fire."

50 "Salt is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavour, how do you make it salty again? You must have the qualities of salt among yourselves and live in peace with each other."

...the story is continued in Mark part 2

It is interesting that Jesus asked them this question because from what comes next we can see that He actually already knew what they were talking about. This is very similar to how Jesus likes us, when we pray, to tell Him about the things we are worried about and need help with - even though He knows every detail about us already. The reason it is still important for us to do this when we pray is because it reminds us that we need His help and is part of us admitting that we are relying on Him and His care and concern for us.

Jesus led by example with this. He deserved to be first in every way but He came to this earth to serve us by doing what was necessary to rescue us. Jesus would never ask you to do something that He wasn't prepared to do Himself.

Jesus was using a child to illustrate that paying attention to the needs of the insignificant people in society, the nobodies, the downtrodden, those that seem less important is actually really important to God, and shows that we value what God values.

In the Old Testament God said to His people, the Jews, that He would bless those that bless them. Here we see Jesus extending that promise by saying that if someone does something to anybody that follows Him then their kindness will be rewarded. We can also learn from this that God uses people, even those that don't know Him, to help His followers, by encouraging people to do it by blessing them when they do it.

Jesus is teaching how awful hell is by saying that if purposely and permanently injuring yourself, during your life time on this earth, would prevent you from going to hell - then it would be worth doing! All the discomfort and problems it would cause for 60 or 70 years would be nothing compared to the pain and torment it would have saved you from! We so easily become fixated on the here and now that it is easy to forget that what we go through here will, one day in the future when we look back, seem like a very quick passing time. We need to think much more about our eternal future and much less about living for now.

Jesus wants our lives to make a difference to those around us. He doesn't just want us to have quiet, private beliefs that don't affect people and situations. He wants the things we believe about Him to make an impact on those we come into contact with.