

Jesus 101 INTRODUCTION  
TO THE REAL JESUS

# MARK

Good News!



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# Dedication

I dedicate this booklet to  
You, my dear Jesus, because  
You gave Your life as a RANSOM  
for me. I will be eternally grateful  
for all of Your suffering and death  
on my behalf. I now live with  
the assurance of my salvation  
through Your merits, and I  
joyfully dedicate  
my life to You.  
I love You!  
ET



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# The *Gospel* of the Servant

I have good news and bad news for you. Which one do you want first? I usually want the good news first, hoping that it will outweigh the bad news that follows. “Even though it is cancer, it is curable; that’s the good news.” Well . . . praise the Lord! Thank you! Thank you! So, what’s the bad news?

It all started on Mother’s Day 2011. My parents, my husband, and I were celebrating the special day in a restaurant (I still have a photo I took with my iPhone that day). In the middle of the meal, my dad showed us an unusual swelling on his neck. He casually mentioned that he must have strained a muscle or something, but the swelling had grown to a golf-ball size within the last four days. I made him promise me that he would go to the doctor that week. You see, he, like my mother, is a cancer survivor. He had already survived two types of cancer and was doing great. What were the chances that the same person would get hit with a third type of cancer? Just in case, I made him promise to see his doctor . . .

The results came back and the unthinkable was happening. He now had a third type of cancer; it was located in the lymphatic system but we didn’t know much more than that. After several tests and a biopsy, the good news and the bad news came in. The good news was that the chances of survival were great; it was considered a pretty curable cancer. Science had advanced in this area of cancer treatment and the percentages presented to us were on his side. It was the least aggressive cancer of its kind. Praise the Lord! What about the bad news?

He would have to suffer through several months of heavy and difficult chemotherapy. He was sure to experience a loss of energy and other side effects, and the possibility of anemia and weight loss

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were also part of the equation. Yes, much suffering awaited him throughout the upcoming months, pretty much for the whole year. But the good news far outweighed the bad news: when the suffering is over, the cancer would probably be gone!

As I write this booklet at the beginning of 2012, my father is cancer free and the only news left is the good news! And once again, I praise the Lord!

We are starting a journey with Mark, the author of the shortest Gospel, through his fascinating account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. He also brings good news and bad news. Which one do you want first? OK. I see you have chosen wisely. Let's start with the good news!

### **The good news**

The author of this exciting book is John Mark, a coworker of the apostle Peter. He writes in a time of crisis and suffering to encourage the faith of those who are overwhelmed by the fearful circumstances surrounding them. He wants to tell them the good news about Jesus and that the final victory against evil is assured. It is believed that this Gospel is Peter's witness of Christ as he shared it with Mark, his associate in the ministry. And this claim makes sense for many reasons, including the fact that this Gospel portrays Peter in a pretty negative light, as if Peter told all of his mishaps to Mark and he diligently wrote them down!

The Gospel of Mark has a fast-moving narrative style that makes you feel like you are right there, witnessing the story. Mark utilizes the Greek historical present tense, many times narrating past actions in the present, something like "And then Jesus comes, and says . . ." The pace of the story is also accelerated by the use of an adverb usually translated as "immediately," giving the impression that everything is happening very promptly. In addition, he uses vivid descriptions of details, events, and people. Even though this is the shortest Gospel of the four, when Mark tells a story also found in other Gospels, it is usually the longest version because it



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includes details that the other Gospel writers do not record.

Mark opens his book by stating, “The beginning of the gospel [good news] of Jesus Christ” (Mark 1:1), hence our subtitle “Mark: Good News!” The Greek noun *euangelion* is translated into English as “good news” or “gospel”—a term that comes from the Old English *godspell*, which means “good news.” The Greek term was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) to announce God’s ultimate deliverance of His people:

How lovely on the mountains  
Are the feet of him who brings good news,  
Who announces peace  
And brings good news of happiness,  
Who announces salvation,  
And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!” (Isaiah 52:7).

When Jesus announces, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the *gospel*” (Mark 1:15; emphasis added), the listeners know that God has come near to bring salvation. *Gospel* became Paul’s favorite term to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16, 17). I think it is highly significant that Mark chose this term to introduce his book about Jesus.

From the very beginning, Mark calls Jesus “Christ” (anointed) and “Son of God” (Mark 1:1). He does not record Jesus’ birth, the angels’ announcement to the shepherds in the fields (Luke 2), or the visit of the wise men from the East (Matthew 2). After a brief mention of the coming of John the Baptist, thereby fulfilling prophecy, Mark takes us directly to Jesus’ baptism and public ministry (Mark 1:9–13). Right after the baptism, Mark records that “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the *gospel* of God” (Mark 1:14; emphasis added).

The first half of this Gospel highlights Jesus’ authority and power as the “Son of God.” Jesus is in charge, possessing great power over nature, demons, disease, and death. From Mark 1:1 to 8:30 everyone

is in awe of Jesus: the Deliverer has come with power and might! But no one could have ever imagined what was coming next.

### **The bad news**

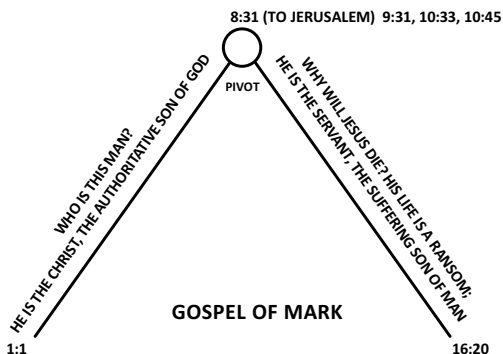
In the middle of the book, the unimaginable happens. The bad news is revealed for the first time: “And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31). Killed? How can the Christ be killed? This was the biggest oxymoron anyone had ever heard! How could God allow His Anointed to be killed? Is Jesus the Son of God or not?

These were the types of questions that no doubt were going through the minds of the disciples. This news was so bad that they didn’t even hear it, they were in denial. If they had paid attention, they would have heard also the final outcome: Jesus would rise again. But the bad news clouded their understanding—because pain does that sometimes. Jesus was not only the authoritative “Son of God,” but He was also the suffering “Son of Man,” who would become the Servant of God and give His life as a ransom for many. The key verse in this Gospel is Mark 10:45 because it answers the question in everyone’s mind: Why does Jesus have to die? “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

The good news is the “cancer” of sin is curable; humankind will not be separated from God forever. The bad news is Jesus will have to suffer and die in our place in order to reconcile us to God. Then He will rise again, and we will have only good news left. It is important to understand the narrative structure of this Gospel to be able to follow the plot. Each half of the book asks a question and eventually provides an answer to it. The circle located right before the top of the graphic (see page 11) points to a pivotal miracle immediately preceding Mark 8:31, which divides the book into two halves. (We will devote chapter 4 of this booklet to that section of

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Mark.) In the first half (Mark 1:1–8:30) everyone is asking, “Who is this Man?” From 8:31 on, everyone is stunned by the bad news that He has to die. From that moment on, Jesus will be on His way to Jerusalem for His final suffering and death. Please take a moment to understand the narrative structure of the Gospel of Mark in this graphic.



### Good news again!

At the time when Mark wrote this account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, all of it had already taken place. Jesus had died and been resurrected. This is the core proclamation of the first-century church. Jesus is Victor, and He is coming back for us. All the news that's left is the good news, just like in my story at the beginning of this chapter; the suffering that brought us peace has already taken place (Isaiah 53:4–6) and now we get to celebrate the outcome! This Gospel is a very encouraging book because it reminds us that, no matter what we are going through today, the final victory has already been attained by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. And THAT, my friend, is GOOD NEWS! So, are you ready? Let's get started!