

# Connection Groups Summer Elective – How to Study the Bible

## LESSON FOUR: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Because God breathed out all Scripture, it has one unified message. God intended each book from Genesis to Revelation to contribute to his unified message about his plan. Therefore, it is not enough to merely ask,

- QUESTION ONE: “What did the author mean in this passage within this book?” That is the first question, but we must also ask this second interpretive question:
- QUESTION 2: How does it fit in the Bible? (That is, How does this passage [within this book] illuminate God’s plan to reconcile us to himself under Christ?)
- QUESTION 3: How should it affect us now? (That is, How should the meaning of the passage [within this book] and its illumination of God’s plan affect me and my listeners now?)
  
- God did not only inspire writings for their original audiences. He did that, and that is important to know! But he did not do only that. For example, Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, “Now these things [from Exodus and Numbers] happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction” (1 Cor. 10:11). Therefore,
  - o a passage within a book meant something to its original author (discerned by asking QUESTION 1), and
  - o it illuminates God’s overall plan (discerned by asking QUESTION 2), and
  - o it should affect us now (discerned by asking)

THE AUTHOR’S MEANING IN MARK 4:35–41 We will briefly explore what the author meant in Mark 4:35–41.

READ Mark 4:35–41.

ANSWER QUESTION 1: What is the author’s point? (That is: What did the author mean in this passage within this book?)

But how do we answer QUESTION 1? Break it into three steps by answering these three smaller questions:

- What is Mark’s point in Mark 4:35–41?
- What is Mark’s point in the entirety of his Gospel?
- How does 4:35–41 contribute to Mark’s overall message in his Gospel?

What Did Mark mean in 4:35–41? Think about the way Mark wrote the story. Get curious about it.

ENGAGE: Make sure you understand the flow of the passage and its details. Don’t assume you know everything.

- Exactly what happens in this story?
- Were others involved in the storm besides the apostles?
- Where exactly was Jesus sleeping? (Wasn’t that where the person who steered the boat was supposed to sit?)
- Were they more afraid of the storm or of Jesus in light of his miracle?
- Considering how terrifying the storm was, and that they really could have drowned (humanly speaking), why does Jesus seem to rebuke the disciples for fear and lack of faith?

ENGAGE: In what stages does Mark unfold this story?

- Mark sets the scene in 4:35–36. (What are some details?)
- The tension mounts in 4:37–38. (Feel the disciples' emotions!)
- The resolution comes in 4:39. (Feel the eerie, sudden calm.)
- Mark records the punch of the story in 4:40–41.

ENGAGE: Would Jesus's activity have reminded the disciples (or Mark's readers) about anything in their Scripture (the OT)?

- The disciple knew the Psalms well.
- Is Mark using rebuke and stillness to call to mind Psalm 104:5–9, 106:9, or 107:23–31?
- And if so, what might Mark be pointing out about Jesus since it is Jesus who now does this clearly divine activity?

ENGAGE: What is Mark's main point in this episode? Notice the final question of the story. It focuses on **Jesus's identity and authority**. Its focus is important, as the next question shows.

What Did Mark Mean within the Gospel of Mark?

- It takes roughly 2 hours to read straight through the Gospel of Mark at the pace of normal speaking. This is important to do at some point. We can learn a lot about what an author meant by reading their whole work.
- In Mark 1–8, Mark asks, "Who is Jesus?" Mark tells fast paced story after story, revealing that Jesus is the Son of God with all authority. Jesus has authority to teach and authority over sins, sicknesses, the Sabbath, demons, storm and water (our passage), a legion of demons, even death itself! **Who is he?** He is God's Son with authority over everything. That is Mark 1–8.
- In the middle of the Gospel of Mark (8:27–9:1), there is a "**hinge passage**" where Jesus asks, "**Who do you say I am?**" This concludes chapters 1–8 with an emphatic "Christ!" (the king with all authority).
- Then Jesus turns their attention to what he will do with such authority: "I will suffer and die and rise. And you must do likewise." This foreshadows Mark 9–16.
- In Mark 9–16, Mark asks, "What exactly will Jesus do in light of who he is?" In chapters 9–16 Mark gives numerous explanations of how this Christ (with all authority over everything) will suffer and die for his people, but rise again, and how his followers must bear their cross and serve others too.

How Does 4:35–41 Fit within the Gospel of Mark?

DISCUSS: How does Mark's main point in Mark 4:35–41 fit within the flow and message of Mark's whole Gospel?

- Mark 4:35–41 fits squarely in Mark 1–8, which is all about who Jesus is and how Jesus has authority over everything. Is it any wonder that Mark 4:35–41 ends with the thought-provoking question about Jesus's identity: "Who then is this man?!" Is it any wonder that it is about his outstanding authority: "Even the wind and seas obey him!"
- In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is the sovereign Son of God who uses his authority over everything to suffer and die and rise for his followers, who must follow him. Mark 4:35–41 helps us see Jesus for who he truly is, with all his glorious and sovereign authority. It sets us up to be utterly astounded when this sovereign Jesus announces that he is here to serve us by giving himself as a ransom for us!

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MARK 4:35–41 FOR US

We will apply QUESTION 3 to the passage: Mark 4:35–41.

READ Mark 4:35–41.

(QUESTION 1) - In short, Jesus has complete divine authority, even over wind and seas. Thus, his followers should trust him without reservation—regardless of how things look around them.

Regarding how this passage (within this book) illuminates God’s plan to reconcile us to himself in Christ (QUESTION 2) - the most striking thing about Mark 4 within the bigger biblical story is that this Son of God with all divine authority over everything uses his authority to willingly serve his subjects, even to death as a ransom for us!

- That is the point of the second half of Mark.
- But it also fits into the wider revelation of God: the God who created seas and wind, who calmed storms throughout the OT, who has authority over everything he has made—that God chose to come in human form and use his absolute power and authority to suffer and die to bless his unworthy followers.
- ANSWER QUESTION 3: How should it affect us now? (That is, How should the meaning of the passage [within this book] and its illumination of God’s plan affect me and my listeners now?)
  - o The challenge for Jesus’s disciples in Mark 4:35–41 was to courageously trust this Jesus implicitly, regardless of what things may look like in their surroundings.
  - o DISCUSS: Turn to the person next to you. Discuss your personal trust and your community’s trust in Christ in light of how he is revealed in Mark 4:35–41.

Nine questions to ask regarding the APPLICATION of the Scriptures to our lives:

- 1. Is there an example for me to follow?**
- 2. Is there a sin to avoid?**
- 3. Is there a promise to claim?**
- 4. Is there a prayer to repeat?**
- 5. Is there a command to obey?**
- 6. Is there a condition to meet?**
- 7. Is there a verse to memorize?**
- 8. Is there an error (doctrinal/theological) to mark?**
- 9. Is there a challenge to face?**

We can all do with a sharper and more awe-filled glimpse of Christ, asking: “Who is this man?!” Another challenge arises because of the part Mark 4:35–41 plays in Mark’s Gospel and God’s plan. Jesus challenged his disciples to follow him. Knowing his power and authority—over everything!—may have made this seem easier. But Jesus was going to use his power to die for others. And he taught that worthy disciples will likewise deny themselves, pick up their cross and follow him.

DISCUSS: Do you use authority to serve others self-sacrificially?

## CLOSING

God’s Word should affect us now, both us and our listeners.

In 2 Timothy 4:1–4, Paul wrote about how Scripture’s authority should affect Timothy:

*4 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Tim. 4:1–4)*

## **One to One – Could it change *Your* life and the life of the *Church*?**

***When Russell's pastor asked him if he'd like to read the Bible with him, little did Russell know that it would change his life...***

Russell has known Jesus all his life. He grew up having been taught the gospel by his parents, and remembers car conversations about the sermon and Bible during the trip home from church each Sunday. The Bible was an integral part of church and home life. Yet in spite of all this, the idea of regularly meeting one to one with someone to read God's Word was a totally foreign concept to Russell.

Russell, with a little hesitation, figured that reading the Bible couldn't do him any harm. Also, his pastor promised that breakfast would be involved, so Russell said yes.

In the ensuing months, Russell and his pastor met early in the morning for breakfast. Russell worked 8am to 6pm in the office of a consulting firm half an hour away, so early meant early. They would meet for a simple breakfast and their time would consist of sharing how their lives were going, praying and reading the Bible.

Russell comments: "I loved tackling a small part of the Bible each week – in particular, thinking hard about how to apply it – how to live in the light of what God was saying. We just sat together – two men before the Scriptures, challenged to live out the Bible in our lives and we prayed that we wouldn't be like men who look in the mirror and walk away, forgetting what they look like (James 1:22-25)."

The time spent with his pastor has shaped Russell's ministry ever since. He has been involved in many other roles at church, but regardless of his other roles, he has made it his goal to meet with one or two other men for one-to-one Bible reading each year.

Now, stop for a moment and imagine how your life might change if you were involved in a one-to-one Bible reading relationship? Four important ingredients to our growing in holiness (sanctification) are: the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, prayer and relationships. Now, imagine if the majority of the people in our church were involved in a one-to-one relationship where they were studying, reflecting upon and applying the Scriptures to their lives and praying together. Do you think it would lead to greater growth in corporate holiness (sanctification)?

I have an idea: What if we were to stop imagining and began considering whom we will begin meeting with this next year? We could find someone to pair up with and read Ephesians together, simply following along with Pastor Tom each week. We can hear the message each week, get together one-to-

one to read and discuss the passage, understand how we can apply it, and then pray for one another and for those around us who need Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Let me know what you think of my idea and if you need any help in getting started.

Pastor Matt

(Story of Russell was adapted from an article in [the Briefing](#) entitled: *Jars of Clay: Learning to read the Bible one to one* by Paul Grimmond)