

# SICK of RELIGION?

Weekly Devotional

*A ministry of Chapel Hill*

*chapelhillpc.org*

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## WEEK 7

*This guide pairs with Mark 3:22-30 and the sermon preached at Chapel Hill April 6-7.*



### **Written by Tina Picard**

Tina has been a member of Chapel Hill for 12 years, along with her husband, Howie. Mom to two grown daughters, and Grammy to three delightful grandchildren. As a staff member, Tina serves in the area of Next Steps, melding her work and passion for connecting people with their God-given abilities and interests. She also loves to study the Word inductively, and connect women to the Word and to each other. She considers herself fortunate to have opportunities within the EPC (at the presbytery and national levels) to do so.

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## **LifeGroup Guide**

### **Review**

How has Jesus been challenging you this week? Where have you experienced transformation?

### **Story**

Mark 3:22-30

### **Head**

What is the accusation of the scribes against Jesus? What do they say about his ability and where he gets that power from?

What is the meaning of the two parables Jesus tells in response to these accusations?

Why does Jesus give his response to his opponents in parables? What is the purpose of parables according to Mark's gospel? (See Mark 4:10-12)

### **Heart**

Even the scribes identify that Jesus has power in the spiritual realm, and that he is able to cast out demons. They mistake where he gets that power from, but they don't question his ability or willingness to defeat evil. What is your experience and perspective on Jesus' authority in the spiritual realm?

The scribes, by accusing Jesus of having an unclean spirit, show hard-hearted rejection and opposition of God. They, by their hearts and their actions, have firmly rejected Christ and blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. What is the eternal consequence for rejection of Christ's redemption (Mark 3:29)? As you consider the seriousness and weight of this for many in our world, let this motivate you to prayer.

What is the good news for all those who accept the offer of forgiveness (Mark 3:28)? What is your response to Jesus—acceptance of his forgiveness, or rejection and opposition of his Holy Spirit? What does your eternity look like as a consequence?

### **Hands**

The scribes were wrong about why Jesus was able to expel demons. Rather let us be reminded through this exchange of the greatness of Jesus' power and authority, that is so much bigger and stronger than Satan. Jesus' exorcisms show the strong man has already been bound (Mark 3:27), that Satan's reign "is coming to an end" (Mark 3:26) and Satan's "kingdom cannot stand" (Mark 3:24). Spend time this week intentionally rejoicing in Christ's victory over Satan, sin and sickness.

Do you need specific prayer support in an area of spiritual darkness in your life? Our prayer ministry is always happy to pray with you after our church services, and hosts an extended time of prayer on the second Sunday each month at 10:00 am in the Prayer Chapel; look for "Healing Prayer" in your weekly worship guide.

**DAY 1 – Monday**  
**Daily devotional**

**Read**

Mark 3:22-30; Mark 1:21-28; Mark 2:5-10; Mark 3:11-12

**Ask**

What is the accusation of the scribes against Jesus? What do they say about his ability and where he gets that power from?

**Reflect**

In Mark 1, we learn that Jesus' teachings were not like that of the scribes. He "taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes." (Mark 1:22) Likewise in Mark 2, Jesus displays his authority to heal and forgive sins. The people come from far and wide, to hear his teaching, and to receive healing and forgiveness. Even the scribes and Pharisees travel from Jerusalem to see this Jesus, whose fame has spread throughout the region, whose authority begins to threaten their own.

This accusation they bring against Jesus, is that he is operating under the influence of Beelzebub—a common Hebraic term for Satan. Contrast this with the perception of the very spirits whom he is casting out—when they encounter him, they fall down and cry out "You are the Son of God." (Mark 3:11) Wittingly or not, both groups have answered Jesus' famous question "Who do you say that I am?" Consider how it is that the religious leaders of the day got it wrong, yet the unclean spirits got it right. What are the implications of their perceptions? Read Isaiah 5:20.

If you have time today read back through Mark 1 through 3 to get the flow of Mark's gospel this far. Do you gain any further insights as to why the scribes and Pharisees are opposed to Jesus' ministry? Spend some time considering the parables in the story, as we prepared to dig in to those tomorrow.

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**DAY 2 – Tuesday**  
**Daily devotional**

**Read**

Mark 3:23-27; Matthew 12:22-32

**Ask**

Why does Jesus give his response to his opponents in parables? What is the purpose of parables according to Mark's gospel? (See Mark 4:10-12)

**Reflect**

Mark and Matthew give very similar accounts of the parables Jesus told the scribes (Pharisees) when they accused him. What similarities do you see? Are there any significant differences?

In telling the parables, Jesus assumes that those who have ears to hear will understand that he cannot do work under the influence of Satan, when the very work he seeks to do opposes the work of Satan himself. Not only this, he has come to establish God's kingdom on earth, which has nothing to do with Satan, and cannot stand if Satan has any influence over it. The additional information we get from Matthew, however, is that the Pharisees were also casting out demons, or unclean spirits. Jesus' question to them is "If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out?" In light of this, the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees seems now to stem from a perceived threat to their own ministry.

A third account of this passage appears in Luke 11:14-23. Read verse 23. According to Jesus, the challenge to his authority and the source thereof stems from what attitude? We tend to want to say that if Jesus is for us, who can be against us, and that's true! (cf. Romans 8:31) Are there times though when your thoughts and attitudes stray from Jesus kingdom goals? Spend the rest of your time today considering this, ask Jesus if you need to and confess those times when you tend to think like scribes or Pharisees.

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## **DAY 3 – Wednesday**

### **Daily devotional**

#### **Read**

Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10; Matthew 12:31-32

#### **Ask**

The scribes, by accusing Jesus of having an unclean spirit, show hard-hearted rejection and opposition of God. They, by their hearts and their actions, have firmly rejected Christ and blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. What is the eternal consequence for rejection of Christ's redemption (Mark 3:29)? As you consider the seriousness and weight of this for many in our world, let this motivate you to prayer.

#### **Reflect**

One of the hardest statements for me to hear as a believer is when someone says to me, "God will never forgive me for what I've done." Every time I hear it my heart just breaks for the person sitting in front of me, and I am quick to tell them that it's not true and bring them to these sets of verses that clearly define the "unforgiveable sin".

As a newer believer in my thirties, I myself grappled with the concept of the "unforgiveable sin". I didn't know enough Scripture to understand exactly what it was, or if I had somehow unwittingly committed it in my early years, and was then disqualified to walk in faith with Jesus. Since that time, these verses have helped me see that "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit" 1 Corinthians 12:3. It is impossible for a committed believer to reject the Holy Spirit in this way.

For those of us who have received Christ's redemption, we have assurance that we belong to Christ through his Spirit. For those who have yet to receive it, as long as there is life there is still time! This is why we are evangelicals. We want to share this good news with others, and see others come to faith in Jesus. Do you know someone who has yet to receive Christ's redemption—yourself, a family member, a dear friend? Pray for the Holy Spirit to move them toward Christ. Use these scriptures as a springboard for prayer.

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## **DAY 4 – Thursday**

### **Daily devotional**

#### **Read**

Mark 3:28, Romans 10:9-11, 1 John 1:9

#### **Ask**

What is the good news for all those who accept the offer of forgiveness (Mark 3:28)? What is your response to Jesus—acceptance of his forgiveness, or rejection and opposition of his Holy Spirit? What does your eternity look like as a consequence?

#### **Reflect**

So far, in the first three chapters of the book of Mark, we see that John offered forgiveness through a baptism of repentance, Jesus offered forgiveness of sins as he healed the sick and lame, and now we come to understand that we can be forgiven even of blasphemous words and attitudes that are contrary to Christ. This is good news!

Unfortunately in our culture, it is harder to see our need for a savior, and sometimes harder still our need for forgiveness. We tend to classify sin as mere mistakes, or missing the mark. While it is true that one of the best Greek definitions we have for sin (hamartia) expresses that sentiment of missing the mark, it really means that we have fallen short of God's standards for our life, and without forgiveness our relationship with God can suffer. This is why it is important to continually check oneself in regard to sin. Read 1 John 1:10.

Spend some time journaling on our culture's attitude toward sin. Is there sin in you and your circle of friends that gets glossed over because it is socially acceptable? Can you think of socially acceptable sin that you may need to confess or separate yourself from? How do you stand up for God's truth in your life when those around you seem immersed in the culture?

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**DAY 5 – Friday**  
**Daily devotional**

**Read**

Mark 3:22, John 5:19, John 6:38

**Ask**

Even the scribes identify that Jesus has power in the spiritual realm, and that he is able to cast out demons. They mistake where he gets that power from, but they don't question his ability or willingness to defeat evil. What is your experience and perspective on Jesus' authority in the spiritual realm?

**Reflect**

Today, read also Romans 8 and Ephesians 6:10-18. These are two great passages that speak to our participation with Christ in the spiritual realm. One talks about the truth of who we are in him, and the benefits he provides to his followers. The other is how we participate with him, in defending ourselves against spiritual attack. Have you seen Christ's power in your life in any of these ways?

As you consider Jesus' authority in the spiritual realm, spend some time today thinking about the areas that you believe you need Jesus' healing and forgiveness, in your own life and the lives of others. Do you believe in his authority over those things? Are your actions consistent with what you say you believe? Are you willing to present yourself to Jesus, as the people did in his day, to experience his power and authority to heal? Consider sharing stories with your LifeGroup and/or friends that testify to his power to heal!

Pray for yourself and others to experience freedom from fear and strongholds that may be holding you back from walking out Christ's freedom in your life.

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## **DAY 6 & 7 – Saturday & Sunday**

### **Daily devotional**

Author's note: take one day to do these exercises and let the other be a Sabbath for your soul—on that day reflect on all you have learned and how the truths of this lesson may “offend the righteous”. Spend some time journaling and re-reading the passage for the week: Mark 3:22-30.

#### **Read**

Mark 3:22-30

#### **Ask**

Do you need specific prayer support in an area of spiritual darkness in your life? Our prayer ministry is always happy to pray with you after our church services, and hosts an extended time of prayer on the second Sunday each month at 10:00 am in the Prayer Chapel; look for “Healing Prayer” in your weekly worship guide.

#### **Reflect**

Below is a list of situations that Jesus encountered through the first three books of Mark. The list is not exhaustive, merely representative. Add your own if you need to! Circle the ones that you identify with. Put a rectangle around the ones that you see affect people in your life:

- Temptation
- Unclean spirits (in our culture we may like this with mental illness)
- Illness—simple, chronic
- Distractions and busyness
- Sin
- Criticism
- Questioning of Christ's authority
- Judgment about worship, Sabbath keeping
- Accusations
- Misunderstood
- Family discord

What truths have you learned this week to help you through one or more of these situations? How can you press in to Jesus to let him have authority over your struggles? Do you need help from your brothers and sisters in Christ? Consider the prayer ministry, lay counseling or other resources to see you through.

Spend time journaling your thoughts and insights from the week.