



**theme:** The Gospel of Mark #1 – Preparing the Way

**materials:** Bibles, paper, pens

Starting this month we will be getting back to some basics and working our way through the Gospel according to Mark. Mark presents Jesus as the Son of God, and in particular as a Servant King. These first two chapters are a very sudden (and abridged) introduction into Jesus' life and ministry, and already he is getting under the skin of some important people.

## welcome

If you knew Jesus was coming back tomorrow, what kind of preparations would you make?

## interact

What kind of preparations need to be made in order to make Jesus welcome in your life? Is there any sin that needs to be acknowledged, confessed, and repented of? Are there any relationships that need to be mended? Take some time in silence to prayerfully consider how Jesus wants you to prepare, and write this down on a piece of paper. If there are any confessions or reconciliations that need to happen, now would be a good time for that. If not, spend some time as a group declaring the greatness of the Lord and welcoming Him at your cell meeting.

## read

Read Mark 1:1-20.

How is John the Baptist preparing the way for the coming of Jesus?

Why did people need to be prepared for Jesus' coming?

The call on John's life – his purpose – was to prepare the way of the Lord. Do you think there is a call on your life? Do you have a set purpose?

What does dunking people in water have to do with Jesus? Why, in other words, did John bother to baptize people in the Jordan River? Why couldn't people just repent with their words?

How does one repent of their sins? Are outward symbols or actions helpful to you in repenting of sins, or in other parts of your religious life?

How did John know that one "greater than he" was coming? Do you think he understood who Jesus was?

How is Jesus being prepared in this passage for His ministry?

How have you been prepared for ministry?

Why do you think the disciples chose to follow Jesus?

And why did Jesus call disciples? Why did He need them? What was He preparing them for?

Do you think you are being prepared for anything by the Lord right now?

## think

How are you preparing the world for the coming of Jesus? Is there sin that needs to be confronted?

As a cell check out [www.justsalvos.com](http://www.justsalvos.com). Are there any sins and injustices described there where we are complicit? (i.e. is anyone still surfing porn on the internet, or unthinkingly buying slave-produced chocolate?)

Take the logs out of your own eyes first, and then do your part in calling people to repentance by getting involved in the anti Human Trafficking campaign.



## live & pray

Do the above-mentioned work of taking the log out of your own eye this week (See Matthew 7:1-5). The Lord wants to prepare you to be His perfect dwelling place, and to help others to be prepared as well. So, with the Lord's help and guidance, remove the sin that enslaves you and holds you back. What is holding you back? What do you need to confess to a brother or sister in Christ and repent of?

## useful resources

Book: *The Prisoner in the Third Cell*, by Gene Edwards

Website: <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bio/191.html> - all about John the Baptist

## leader's guide

John the Baptist's call was to prepare the way for Jesus, God's anointed, to come into the world, and in particular into Israel. His was a message of repentance from sin. Israel understood its exile from the Promised Land (they were living in Israel, but it was under Roman authority) as a consequence of its broken covenant and sin. So the call to repent and be forgiven was the call to re-enter covenant and the promise of God. John was calling all of Judea to this repentance, for the coming Redeemer.

The Jordan River was significant in Jewish history, being the River Joshua led the people across (with another miraculous parting of the waters by God) to get into the Promised Land. This crossing through the waters became a symbol of the 12 tribes becoming a new People, the People of the Covenant. So John baptizing people in the Jordan River deliberately evoked that image, and spoke of the coming of a new "Joshua" (Yeshua – Jesus), a New Covenant, and a new understanding of what it meant to be God's people.

Repentance requires a total turning away from your sin, and a turning towards the ways and the promises of God. Many people find symbols helpful for this, but they are only outward signs of the inward actions.

John understood his ministry as part of the prophecy that a new "Elijah" would be preparing the way of the Lord, and there was a general expectation in Israel that God's anointed one would come and throw off their oppressors. The baptism of Jesus was a preparation for Jesus in that he went through the proper ceremonial actions, but also that He is confirmed in His mission and identity by God the Father speaking and God the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. His journey into the desert to face temptation further prepared Him for the tests and trials of the rest of His life, particularly in the cross.

Jesus was calling His disciples to form the foundation of a new "People of God", to model for them and teach them what it meant to be citizens of God's kingdom, and with the presence of the Holy Spirit to carry on with His message after His death, resurrection, and ascension.