

Apostles Houston  
Life Group Study: Mark 1:1-13

**Love and Laughter** (~15-25 min)

Creating a Sacred Space

Welcome→ Embrace→ Refresh

**Remembering Our Purpose** (~5 min)

Why Do We Do Life Groups? (*feel free to communicate this in your own words*)

In Acts 2, we read how early Christ followers devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. In Life Groups we follow their example with the hope of becoming more like Jesus, the goal of our salvation.

**Being Known** (~10 min)

Story Telling

We believe that loving God and others begins by being known.

*In 5-7 minutes, what do you want us to know about yourself (~5Hs)?*

Pray and Celebrate

Be sure to honor whatever is good or beautiful about their story, and ask one or two people to pray over those who just shared.

**Following Up** (~5-10 min)

Responding to God's Word

If anyone had the chance to hear the sermon from last Sunday, was there anything that stood out to you?

## Hearing the Word (~45 min)

Hearing: (*Read "Context" and then Mark 1: 1-13*)

- Before we dive in, what are some big themes that stand out to you as significant in this passage?
- In vv 2-3, Mark quotes from the prophet Isaiah underlining how the story of Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel's Scriptures. What does it mean for us that Jesus is not just the savior of the world but the promised Jewish Messiah? What does that say about God?
- In v 4, notice how it isn't just individuals who are being baptized, but the "country" of Judea and "all" of Jerusalem. John's baptism represents a collective turning to God along with an individual confession of sins. How do we engage in collective sins that need to be forgiven? What does it look like for us as a Life Group to seek repentance in these matters?
- In v 8, John describes Jesus as one who not only baptizes with water but with the Holy Spirit. Notice how after his own baptism, Jesus had the Spirit descend on him in the form of a dove. A life shaped by Baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit is marked not only by repentance but by the indwelling Spirit. What does it look like to be empowered by the Spirit?
- **Main Idea:** What is the main idea of this passage?

Obeying:

- The famous Reformer, Martin Luther, said, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' he willed the entire life of his believers to be one of repentance." How can we live, both individually and collectively, lives shaped by repentance?
- How is the Spirit leading you to respond this week in your own context?

*(Teacher prays for the grace to respond faithfully to the Spirit's leading)*

## Soul Care (~20 min)

### Prayer Requests

As people share their needs, pause and ask for a volunteer to lift that need up when we begin praying. Depending on the size of your group, decide if it is best to split up or pray as a group.

## Announcements (~5 min)

- None this week!

## Teacher's Notes

### Context

Having just celebrated Christmas, it may strike us as strange that Mark begins his Gospel without a birth narrative. We are greeted first by the hopes of Israel, then John the Baptist before Jesus shows up in the narrative. As you read, consider how the passage invites us into a lifestyle of repentance. Consider also what baptism means for us today as those who not only have the baptism of John but the baptism in the name of Father, Son and Spirit.

### Specific Insights

- The verses in Mark 1:2-3 actually describe John's ministry, not Jesus'. But it does connect John's ministry as a throughline from the prophets to Jesus' own ministry. The quotation is actually an amalgamation of several different Scripture passages. The first verse ( v 2) comes from both Exodus 23:20 and Malachi 3:1, underlining how God's promises have been there in both Law and Prophets. The second two lines (v 3) come from Isaiah 40:3, a text where God proclaims comfort to his people and affirms he will bring about their restoration.
- In the prophetic literature, "forgiveness of sins" is a promised reality that goes beyond individual sins. It is frequently tied to the hope of Israel's national restoration. For example, in 2 Chronicles 7:14 we read, "if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." John picks up this thread in his wilderness ministry.
- As soon as Jesus receives the Spirit, it leads him into the wilderness. We read in Matthew's account of the wilderness temptation that Satan's focus was to carry out his messianic role in worldly ways. (Mt 4:1-11) We see a similar temptation presented in Mark 8:31-35. Yet, Jesus resists, determined that to be Israel's messiah means dying on a cross. The contesting views of what it means to be Israel's messiah will be a continuing theme throughout Mark. It does not look as we (or Jesus' audiences) expect; it is not marked by bombastic power but with merciful self-giving love.