

Step-by-Step

The Come before Winter experience includes practicing “biblical exegesis.” This type of study is designed to let the Bible speak its own message. A foundational element of expository teaching, the process is sometimes called “inductive,” “contextual,” or “historical.”

We use this method, believing that if we invest in the Word of God--as it is written, in the context in which it is written--we will begin to hear God--individually, personally and “in His own words,” so to speak.

However, hearing God through the pages of the Bible requires an attentive ear. This book of books represents a library of collected writings by a multitude of authors living in a variety of cultures over the span of hundreds of years. These writers penned their pieces in a wide array of genres. Some are poetic, others are narrative, some are biographical or apocalyptic, while others are letters; one even follows the pattern of a political treaty! Each work deserves an examination that considers its unique purpose and construction.

We cannot in these short materials teach appropriate methods for examining each biblical genre. We can, however, encourage you to enter the

pages of the biblical text aware of its complexities, prompt you to consider their import, and then assist you as you immerse yourself in its Word. We can remind you to be steadfast in prayer as you study, to seek a personal word of instruction from the Lord, and to adapt your life accordingly. These materials function as prompts that should facilitate your study by reminding you of various questions and actions that can be taken--should be taken--when listening to the biblical message. **Will you enter into this great experiment with us?** Can we allow God, through His Holy Spirit, to teach us? What if we do not consult other books or commentaries until we are almost finished with our study?

What can we discover from simply reading the Bible--in context? Can the Word of God become a teacher that will light a new fire in us, a new energy for Bible study?

This is not a “system” or a “new way to study the Bible.” Many study in this way. What we propose is an “approach,” a few tools and ideas. Our hope is that we can open the door to an experience that allows the text itself to lead the way as God provides us with the “ears to hear” and the “eyes to see.”

Exegesis-- Greek; meaning “to lead out of.” In this type Bible study, the student studies in context, so as to lead the meaning of the teaching straight out of the biblical text.

The Approach in Brief:

- Step 1. Pray, read, seek, and listen (repeat often)**
- Step 2. Uncover the context**
- Step 3. Examine what is written**
- Step 4. Consider the depth of what is being communicated**
- Step 5. Determine the point being made**
- Step 6. Apply the message to YOUR life**
- Step 7. Organize your lesson**

There is no substitute for reading the Bible. **The Bible is its own best interpreter.**

Step 1

OBJECT: Pray, read, seek, & listen (Ask and answer your questions until you are satisfied.)

Goal 1: Focus on preparing to hear God

- A. Pray** for your own spiritual growth and insight. Do I really want to know what this book is teaching?
- B. Read**, read, read! At first, don't try to analyze; just READ!
1. Repeatedly, in one sitting, and as often as possible.
 2. From a variety of translations.
 - a. Gain a broader perspective of nuances of the text.
 - b. Identify distinctive aspects of particular translations.
 - c. Investigate those verses that require further study.
- C. Determine (as best you can) the occasion of the writing.**
1. Seek out the basic facts. Investigate the following aspects of the writing, examining both the writing itself and appropriate secondary sources.* This is for your information. Enjoy the investigation!
 - a. Position (in the biblical text as a whole)
 - b. Author
 - c. Time
 - d. Place
 - e. Intended readers and relationships
 - f. Type of writing or genre
 2. Synthesize the details.
- D. Listen! Read some more; try to hear the text; gradually become more analytical.**
1. Questions? Take note, consider, store them away, and keep reading!
 2. Every once in a while, take time to stop, listen, and think about your questions. Pray!
 3. Then...KEEP READING!

***J**ust a note--

The introduction to a good commentary will provide insight into all of these basic facts for any book of the Bible. Bible handbooks are other good sources. Additionally, you can also do searches for such information at www.searchgodsword.org.

Understanding requires context—a **passage is one small part of a larger message**. The point of the larger message helps untangle the point of the passage.

Step 2

OBJECT: Uncover the context

Locate the major sections in the book

- A. Look for the natural movements in the writing for initial clues** (see Diagram 1, p. 5)
1. Transitional words
 - Time shifts
 - Movements
 - Conclusions
 2. Linked words, ideas, or events
 - Repetitions
 - Similarities
 - Contrasts/Comparisons
- B. Define, if you can, the pieces of the writing in the book.** What are the building blocks the writer uses to make his points? Locate the stories, sermons, teachings, poems or songs, or other various pieces of the writing. Does the writing divide into introductions, points, examples, and conclusions? Where do each of these pieces begin and end?
- C. Hypothesize about where major sections might begin and end** (based on your conclusions from 1 & 2 above.) Try to group these stories, points, examples, and conclusions. Remain open-minded. How might these pieces function together to develop a point?
- D. Consider themes as a preliminary exercise; don't get bogged down.** What do all these stories/passages have in common? How are they connected? How do they differ? How does the argument progress? Could the stories somehow link together to make bold theological statements?
- E. Check outlines in commentary introductions** (don't use the textual helps at this time) or those in study Bibles. Look up at least the first and last verse of each section they reference to see if you can follow the reasoning. Do you agree with the divisions? How would you adjust them? Why would you adjust them?
- F.** Often, one enters the Bible, wanting to explore a particular passage. In this material, we will call that passage the **focus text**. Once you have identified your focus text and explored the various outlines, (see E above), note where in the various outlines your focus text will fall. What can you learn by the text's location in the book as a whole? On page 4*, for example, if Mark 10.51 were the focus text, we see that it falls at the very end of Jesus' ministry before arriving at Jerusalem in a section of the text that highlights **seeing**. Thus, the leper's desire to "see" bears significance.
- G.** Identify the **narrower context**. Which sentences surrounding the **focus text** work together to form one unit of thought? Use the outline on page 4 (IIC) to identify the narrow context of Mark 10.51. In Mark, these stories all focus on a follower's ability or inability to **see** the kingdom. Thus, we learn what **seeing** entails by studying this section most intensely.
- H.** The major section in which your text lies will be called its **broader context** (see page 4). When we identify and study the **broader context**, we recognize that Mark has been working toward the leper's declaration that he desires to see for quite some time. We gain insight, then, into the significance of the request in Mark's gospel as a whole. How does your focus passage fit into the broader argument or context?

*The outline is also reflected in the text at the end of the notebook, pages 14-21.

Locate the major sections

OUTLINE FROM STUDY

Mark's major sections | A general, thematic outline for the book of Mark, focusing on the message of his ministry in Galilee

Below please find a copy of Karen Alexander's outline of Mark. For your study, you will want to devise your own outline of the book you are studying. Using resources such as bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and the introductions to commentaries*, seek out a variety of outlines for the book. Compare and contrast the different outlines, using your bible to understand the likely reasons for dividing the text in these ways. After a few readings of the book, you will begin to develop your own opinions about the book's outline. You will likely change this outline as you continue to study, but developing such an outline gives you a foundational grasp on the book and its structure.

Mark

I. Introduction, preparation for ministry, and initial conflict: (1.1-3.6)

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 1.1
Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. 3.6

II. The message of Jesus in Galilee and the reactions there: (3.7-10.52)

A. *Be careful how you hear!* 3.7-6.6

If anyone has ears to **hear**, let him hear. Consider carefully what you **hear**.
With the measure you use it will be measured to you--and even more." 4.23-24

B. *Understand the message of the loaves!* 6.7-8.21

...they had not **understood** about the loaves...6.52
"Do you still not see or **understand**?" 8.17
He said to them, "Do you still not **understand**?" 8.21

C. *Desire to see!* 8.22-10.52

Jesus asked, "Do you **see** anything?" 8.24
The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to **see**." 10.51

Broader
Context

Narrower
Context

III. Entrance and teaching in Jerusalem: (11.1-13.37)

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany... 11.1
"What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'" 13.37

IV. Preparations for the cross: (14.1-42)

V. Unfolding the Passion Narrative: Arrest, trial, and death of Jesus--(14.43-15.47)

VI. News of the Risen Lord

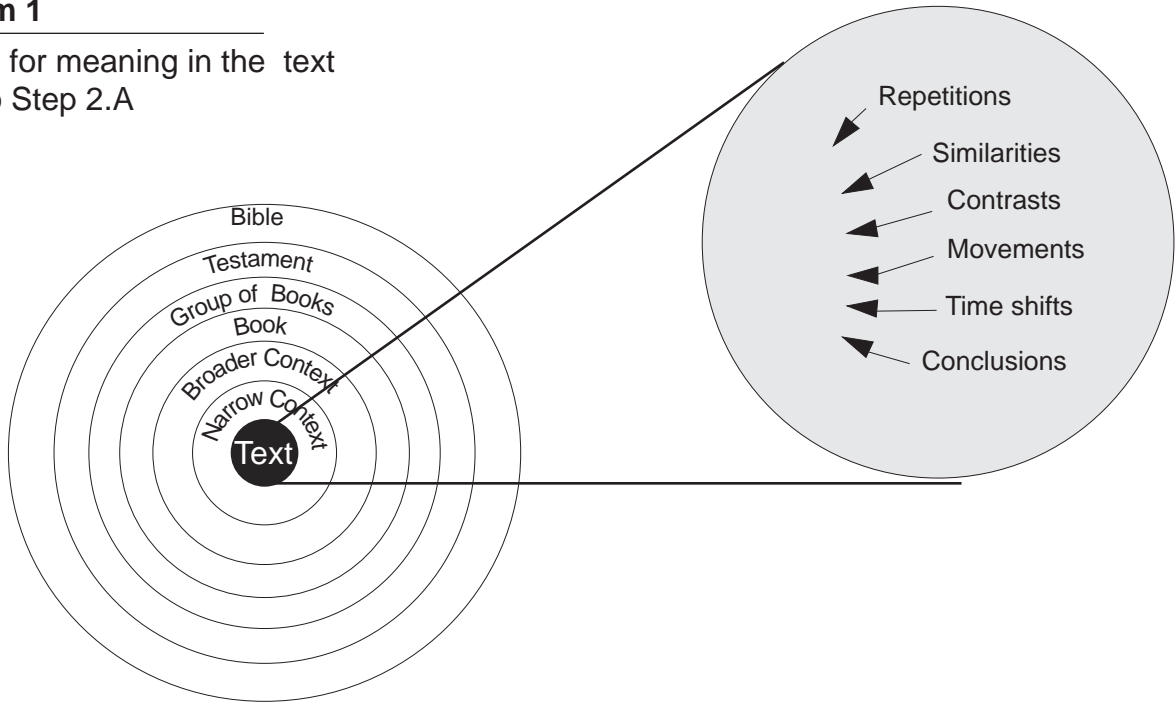
- A. The resurrection: (16.1-8)
- B. The longer ending: (16.9-20)

* Avoid using the portions of the commentary that are dedicated to explanations of the text until you have completed your study. This type commentary on a book will become a welcome conversation partner after you have studied enough to earn your place in such a discussion.

**This outline is also reflected in the text at the end of the notebook, pages 14-21.

Diagram 1

Looking for meaning in the text
Refer to Step 2.A



Finding meaning in the biblical text

Only after you have examined the text in its context are you able to scrutinize its contents without losing the proper perspective. Take a good look!

Step 3

OBJECT: Examine what is written

Learn to be a careful reader (Worksheet 1, page 11, might help.)

A. Notice the words in the passage or section

1. Notice the repetitions (including frequency of)
 - a. Words.
 - b. Similar phrases or ideas
2. Consider the verbs.
 - a. Do they point out action?
 - b. Do they offer advice?
 - c. Do they speak to the state of being?
3. Note the comparisons & contrasts (of individual words, groups of words, phrases, ideas)
4. Locate transitional words.
 - a. Do they indicate time shifts?
 - b. Do they introduce movement (either geographical and physical)?
 - c. Do they highlight conclusions?
 - d. Do they earmark structure?

Learn to be a careful reader, continued

5. Examine the significant words (also places, phrases, or concepts).
 - a. What does this word (or phrase) actually mean?
 - b. Where else do we read of this place?
 - c. Consider its use in writings by the same author or in a similar time?
 - d. Consider its other appearances in the New Testament?
 - e. Consider its other appearances in the Old Testament?

B. Inspect the sentences

1. Is a question involved? If so, how is it answered?
 - a. By direct response?
 - b. In a story (or parable)?
 - c. With a biblical reference?
 - d. By comparison?
 - e. Other?
2. Consider the construction of the text. Why might the author have organized his thoughts in this way?
 - a. To define concepts?
 - b. To expose deeper meaning?
 - c. To create an image?
 - d. To mark a theme?
3. Look for summations.
 - a. Look back at your transitional words (see A4 above).
 - b. Can you use these words to help you outline/understand the text? Do they?
 - i. Provide keys to structure.
 - ii. Summarize the heart of the author's message.
 - iii. Flag key points in the development of a theme.

C. Use the details you have collected to help you look for themes

1. Back off from the details and think.
 - a. What ideas or points most often appear here?
 - b. What ideas or points stand out as significant? Why?
 - c. How do these points work together?
2. Attempt to trace the theme through the section or book.
 - a. How does the passage contribute to the development of the theme?
 - b. How does the passage support the concepts already presented?
 - c. How is the passage biblically consistent overall?
 - d. What are fundamental principles that apply to all of life?

* **J**ust a note--

Finding themes:

Themes emerge from single words on flat pages when one begins to see patterns and emphases in the details of study. Often, we collect the details of knowledge, but do not take the time to back off far enough from the material to see the collective point being made.

Once you have examined the details, you must attempt to calculate the sum of **all** the facts.

The gospels are full of men and women who witnessed the miracles of Jesus and heard His teaching. They followed Him, crowding in so closely that He could not even find the time to eat. They "saw" it all; but they did not have "ears to hear" or "eyes to see." They were blind.

In the 21st century, we are no more likely to "see" or "hear" than they. We too are in danger of witnessing the story without the experience. Finding themes helps us grasp the message.

A theme emerges from the details as one of the main ideas. Working with this method, you will collect the information you need to help you begin to discover the themes in the book you are studying. Pray about this. You will find many themes in the passages. In the Bible, these themes are interconnected and often repeated. Thinking about a book's themes in light of the Bible's overall teaching will reap an even more abundant harvest. ka

Finding meaning in the biblical text

Ask yourself: What did this text communicate to the people who first heard it? Remember: **A text will never mean anything today that it did not mean at the time it was written.**

Step 4.

OBJECT: Consider the depth of the communication

GOAL: Spend some time **THINKING** about the passage in light of what you have learned. Give yourself opportunity to consider the **wonder and depth** of God's multi-layered Word.

1. **Consider the time(s) and events you discovered.** If the time of the writing is debated, take a moment to think about each of the time periods. Stretch yourself to imagine what this instruction might have meant to either group that could have been the author's intended readers. In your opinion, does the writer's argument, teaching, or story speak to one time more than the other?
2. **Recall once more the specific circumstances that led up to this writing.** Did you find specific situations in the lives of the writer or the intended readers to inform this writing? If this writing tells a story, how do the specific circumstances and issues at play in the story impact or dovetail with the historical circumstances you discovered?
3. **Look at the teaching, the events, or the story from the different points of view.**
 - How does this writing speak for the writer, considering his time, place, culture and situation? How does his situation interact with the themes and details he has chosen to include??
 - How does this writing speak to or encourage the intended readers of this writing? Consider their time, place, culture, and situation.
 - How do the events at the time of the writing influence the way the characters are portrayed in the passage? Consider their time, place, culture, and situation.
 - How would this document have been read in the time, place, culture and situation that first recognized it as holy? What would it have meant to them?

* Just a note--

Finding meaning beneath the words

Communication occurs both verbally and NONverbally. When people talk, they rely on more than words. When you left home as a teenager, your mother might have said, "Remember who you are and whose you are!" She was not reminding you to remember your name and your father's name in case you got lost! **There is a history and context in every communication that speaks louder than the sum of the words.**

Bible readers can miss a wealth of teaching if they fail to reflect on the vast layers in the biblical text. At some point, the careful student should reflect on the information he has collected--**as well as the words he has read.** Knowledge about the writer and his intended audience, the characters in the text, and the history of the story, for instance, all contribute to the point the reader will take away from the written words. All texts, for example, involve the history

of at least TWO time periods: 1) the time when the writing or the events **occurred**, and 2) the time when that writing became generally recognized, written down, and/or passed along to people in need of its message. The **occurrence** or the **incident of the writing**, though informative, may be less significant than recognizing that the text was **needed and instructional** for people living 30 or 60 years later.

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Teachers make a serious mistake when they collect a lot of information, but never determine the POINT. We make a near fatal mistake when we teach that information, rather than ONE POINT.

Step 5

OBJECT: Determine the point being made

(Worksheet 2, page 12, might help.)

A. Reflect. Reexamine the information you collected. Reflect.

1. Consider the situation once more in light of your more recent study. Do you have further insights? What circumstance(s) did you discover in the narrow context that seem to act as background for this passage?
2. Look over worksheet 1 (p. 11).
 - a. How do the oft repeated words and phrases fit the passage as well as the larger context(s)?
 - b. How do the details in the text (the linked phrases, the verbs, verb forms and comparisons and contrasts) convey meaning for the passage and its larger context(s)?
 - c. What is the answer to the question asked in the text, if there was one?
 - d. What were the summation points in the passage? What did they emphasize?
 - e. Can you identify a main point for the passage itself?
3. Do the parts fit together? Test your conclusions.
 - a. How does the teaching in this passage advance the teaching of the broader context?
 - b. How does this teaching support concepts already presented?
 - c. Is the teaching biblically consistent overall?

B. Synthesize

1. Run a self test. Details may escape us, but we remember substance. Back off from the details of your study for awhile—a day or two is not too long, if you have the time. While away from your notes and the text, ask yourself:
 - a. What seems important to me? What points stand out as significant?
 - b. What have I learned?
 - c. How do these points work together?
 - d. What do I see as the primary point in this text?
2. Try to write in one sentence the main point of this passage.

C. Explore. Enjoy a lengthy conversation with others who have studied this text. When you have access to the materials, you may want to examine the details found in secondary resources (e.g., commentaries). Compare their findings with yours.

1. Discover new applications you have not considered.
2. Add to your list of illustrations.
3. Find further support for your findings.
4. Make adjustments, if you find the need.

D. Pray, wait, and keep listening.

A recent study indicated that less than one of ten Christian teenagers who have attended church and possess a fair amount of Bible knowledge, are able to translate that knowledge into life situations.

Step 6

OBJECT: Apply the message to YOUR life (Worksheet 3, page 13, might help.)

Reflect, synthesize, explore, pray, and listen (some more)

A vast difference exists between head knowledge and a heart given to Jesus. An enormous gulf flows between one who knows about God and one who knows God.

We can learn, even teach, without engaging our lives. Yet a disciple's credibility resides in her influence. She would do better to muddle the facts and model the concept than to know all the right information and live an empty life. ***One cannot emphasize this enough, for in knowing Him, true renewal occurs.***

- A. **Identify the fundamental human conditions (that never change) addressed in this passage.**

- B. **Identify one or two recent and specific situations that prove that neither you nor your culture have mastered the concepts, attitudes, and relational issues found in this passage.**
 1. In your own life first
 2. In the life of your family
 3. In the life of your friends
 4. In the life of your church body
 5. In society as a whole

- C. **Describe a situation similar to those in each of the above categories which you are likely to encounter this week.**

- D. **Meditate on the main point you identified in the passage you studied in light of the above situations. How does this truth impact the specific situations you identified in "B" above?**

- E. ***Imagine yourself living out this principle. How will it look next week (in the specific situations you identified) when you apply the principle(s) you learned in this text?***

Step 7

OBJECT: Organize your sharing

Plan what you will share with the group

Sharing what God has revealed to us during a study represents a highlight of a Come before Winter event. Each of you will own three minutes of the day to share--ever so briefly--what the Lord has revealed to you during your time with Him this week. .

- A. Read the broader context** of your focus passage **once more**, paying particular attention to the narrower context you have chosen.

- B. Read the sentence you wrote** (Worksheet 2, 4.C.) **and reflect on your reasons for highlighting this point.**
 - 1. What in your study has influenced you to read the passage as you do?
 - 2. What did you “hear” in the text that may have made a difference in your reading of this passage?
 - 3. Are you satisfied with your work?

- C. Write your sentence as it now stands in the “specific insight” portion of Worksheet 3.**

- D. Reflect once more on your practical application(s) for the week** (see Worksheet 3).
 - 1. Consider all the many applications you might make next week, given what God has shown you this week.
 - 2. Which application will help you to make the most significant use of your learning?
 - 3. Confession often becomes a part of our sharing as we unload burdens we have carried far too long. Take a moment or two for prayer; be honest with God, confessing. Don’t carry one extra bag with you when you leave!

- E. Write your application, your “Monday Meaning” in the appropriate portion of Worksheet 3, #4.**

Examine what is written

WORKSHEET 1

Consider these examples from Mark 10.35-45 as you explore your text.

Notice repetitions (& frequency of)

Words: Ex.: baptized--Mark 10.38, 39

Similar phrases or ideas: Ex.: great, greatest, rulers, high

Verbs/verb forms

Example: You do not know what you are asking--10.38a

Comparisons/contrasts

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles... Instead, servant. --Mark 10.42-43

Transitional Words

(time? movement? conclusion?) Example: **When** the ten heard about this, they became indignant...Mark 10.41; **For** even the Son of Man...Mark 10.45

Significant words, places, phrases, or concepts. Explore a concordance or use other helps to do a word study or examine the word, place, phrase or concept more thoroughly. Example: Son of David. Other occurrences in Mark: 12.35; In N.T. Matt. 1.1, 1.20, 9.27, 12.23, 15.22; 20.30,31; 21.9,15; 22.42; Lk 3.31; 18.38,39; In O.T. --2 Sam.13.1; 1 Chron. 29.22; 2 Chron. 1.1; 11.18, 13.6, 30.26, 35.3; Pr. 1.1; Ecc 1.1

Question(s): Implied question: "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask." (**Will you?**) Mark 10.35

Answers: (direct response, story, biblical reference or allusion, comparison?): Jesus' final reply: "These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." Mark 10.40

Get the Main Point

WORKSHEET 2

Reflect synthesize, explore, pray and listen

1. **Reflect: Consider the section you are studying. Ask God to help you see it more clearly.**

2. **Synthesize: Ponder questions similar to these and ask for greater understanding**
 - a. What do each of the texts in this section have in common?
 - b. Which segments of the section do not seem to fit? Why?
 - c. How has the story advanced from the beginning to the end of this section? How did the author communicate these changes in the story?
 - d. What happens immediately after this section and before it?
 - e. Where did this book begin and how does it end?
 - f. This book is about...
 - g. The section I am studying is about...
 - h. The passage I am studying adds to the meaning of the story by...
 - i. I am more prepared for the end of the book after studying this section because...

3. **Pray and listen:**
 - a. Ask God to help you see this writer's purpose more clearly so that you might recognize the point of the passage you are studying.
 - b. Leave it (at least overnight, a day or two is not too long). Don't labor with it any longer.
 - c. When it comes to mind, pray; ask God to make it plain and simple in your mind, but don't try to figure it out any longer.
 - d. When you go to sleep that night, ask yourself, "What have I learned that is truly significant?" Thank God for those insights. Ask God to shine His light on the text so that you may see it clearly.

4. **Find the point:** Though we will never know fully everything that could be discovered from a text, we can come to a point where we are able to say this: "Today, after study, prayer, and listening, this passage means ... to me."
 - a. After you have spent some time away from the detailed notes of your study (at least over night), ask yourself again: What have I learned that is truly significant? Write these things down. Resist the temptation to go back to your notes. Just be quiet and see what comes up.
 - b. Look at your list.
 - i. Do these things have anything in common?
 - ii. How are they communicated to you in the text?
 - iii. If you had to nail down ONE teaching that seems most significant in this text, what would it be?
 - c. Struggle to write that point in ONE sentence. At least be able to say what you have learned in 15 to 45 seconds.

The Passage in its Contexts

APPENDIX 1

3.6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Broader Context begins: Be careful how you hear!

3.7-8 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. ⁸When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon.

...

4.3 "Listen!"

Parable of the Sower A farmer went out to sow his seed....

4.9 Then Jesus said, "**He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**" When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. ¹¹He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹²so that,

"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,
and ever hearing but never understanding;
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

Explanation of the *Parable of the Sower*

4.13 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."

...

4.22 For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.

4.23 "**If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.**"

4.24-25 "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."

4.33-34 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

...

Stories of God's power on earth

- Jesus calms the storm--Mark 4.35-41
- The healing of the demon-possessed man--5.1-20
- Healing of a dead girl--5.21-24; 35-43
- Healing of a woman with an issue of blood--5.25-34
- Jesus rejected in Nazareth--6.1-6

6.6 And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

(Transitional between hear & understand--updates on ministry)

6.7 Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.

...

6.14-29 (John the Baptist is beheaded)

6.14 "When King Herod heard.... 6.16 But when Herod heard this ...

6.20 When Herod heard John.... 6.29 On hearing this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

...

Focus changes: Understand the message of the loaves!

6.35-44 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

³⁸"How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."...

⁴²They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish....

6.51-52 Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened....

7.14-15 Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"...

7.27-29 “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.

“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”

...

8.4-9 His disciples answered, “But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?”

“How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked.

“Seven,” they replied.

He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. About four thousand men were present.

...

8.14-21 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. “Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.”

They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.”

Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don’t you remember?”

“When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

“Twelve,” they replied.

²⁰“And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

They answered, “Seven.”

²¹He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

Focus changes: Desire to see!

Narrower Context begins

8.22-10.52 ²²They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?”

²⁴He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.”

²⁵Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶Jesus sent him home, saying, “Don’t go into the village.”

²⁷Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea

Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”

²⁸They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

²⁹“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Christ.”

³⁰Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³²He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

³⁴Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Mark 9

¹And he said to them, “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.”

²After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

⁸Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.

¹¹And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

¹²Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? ¹³But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

¹⁴When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were over-

whelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

¹⁶“What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

¹⁷A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I

¹⁹“O unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

²⁰So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

²¹Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

“From childhood,” he answered. ²²“It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

²³“If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.”

²⁴Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

²⁵When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

²⁶The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

²⁸After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

²⁹He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

³⁰They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” ³²But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

³³They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” ³⁴But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

³⁵Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

³⁶He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷“Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

³⁸“Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

³⁹“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you

belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.

⁴²“And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. ⁴³If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.

⁴⁵“And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell.

⁴⁷“And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸where

“their worm does not die,
and the fire is not quenched.’

⁴⁹Everyone will be salted with fire.

⁵⁰“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

Mark 10

¹Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

²Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”

³“What did Moses command you?” he replied.

⁴They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.”

⁵“It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. ⁶“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ⁷“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

¹⁰When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹²And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

¹³People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” ¹⁶And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

¹⁷As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁸“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”

²⁰“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

²¹Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

²²At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

²³Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

²⁴The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

²⁸Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!”

²⁹“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

³²They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. ³³“We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, ³⁴who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

³⁵Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

³⁶“What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

³⁷They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

³⁸“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

³⁹“We can,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

⁴¹When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴²Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Passage begins

⁴⁶Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging.

⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁸Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." ⁵⁰Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

⁵²"Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Passage ends

Narrower Context ends

Broader Context ends

Broad! Narrower Context continues

Mark 11

¹As **they approached Jerusalem** and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ²saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

