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Editorial Office 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904
Come visit us at our website at <https://www.adultbiblestudyguide.org>.

Principal Contributor
Thomas R. Shepherd

Associate Editor
Soraya Homayouni

Pacific Press®
Miguel Valdivia

Editor
Clifford R. Goldstein

Publication Manager
Lea Alexander Greve

Art Director and Illustrator
Lars Justinen

Editorial Assistant
Sharon Thomas-Crews

The teachers edition components were written by the following:

The Overview, Commentary, and Life Application, Lessons 1–13: Teófilo Correa, PhD, Old Testament professor, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies; Philippines.

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The Gospel of Mark



From the beginning of Mark, the reader knows who Jesus is—the Messiah, the Son of God (*Mark 1:1*). However, people in the story struggle with understanding just who He is and what He is all about—except for those with demons. They know exactly who He is! The demons recognize Him and wither before His mighty words.

But Jesus rather consistently commands that they keep this information quiet. Why this command for secrecy? Bible students for centuries have mulled over this question. It even has a name in scholarship—the Messianic Secret. Why would Jesus want to keep quiet about who He is?

What will become clear in this journey through the Gospel of Mark is that not only is there secrecy in this book—there is also amazing revelation. It can rightly be called the Revelation/Secrecy Motif, and it runs through the Gospel of Mark. Although at the end of the book, all the secrecy is surprisingly replaced with a powerful revelation of Jesus.

Mark can be divided into two distinct sections—halves, actually. Chapter one through near the end of chapter eight deals with the crucial question, Who is Jesus? The answer is displayed in His teachings and His miracles. Again and again, He defeats evil, brings hope to the oppressed, and teaches compelling truths that cut to the heart of human existence. All this shouts to the reader that He is the Messiah, the Christ, whom the Hebrew people have long been awaiting.

However, it is not until the middle of the book that someone not demon-possessed rightly declares who He is, thereby answering the question of the first half of the book about Christ's identity. And that person is Peter, who declares, " 'You are the Christ' " (*Mark 8:29, ESV*).

The second half of Mark, from Mark 8:31 to the end of the book, answers the other question, Where is Jesus going? The answer is shocking. He is going to the cross, the most ignominious and shameful manner of death in the Roman world. And it is such an unexpected destination for the Messiah, who His followers think will defeat Rome and establish Israel as a powerful nation.

The Gospel of Mark shows us the darkness that Christ experienced, the cost of our salvation.

Jesus' bumbling disciples cannot fathom what He is saying. As the book progresses, they ask less and less about this painful topic, until finally they are reduced to silence in the face of the unwelcome truth.

Things look gloomier and gloomier when Jesus confronts the religious leaders who plot His demise. The disciples, hopeful of a glorious kingdom, are shocked by an arrest, trial, and crucifixion that defies their expectations.

But through all this, Jesus keeps a clear and consistent message of where He is going and what it means that He will die and rise again. The bread and cup of the Last Supper will represent His body and blood (*Mark 14:22–25*), and He will become a ransom for many (*Mark 10:45*).

This does not mean He went to the cross in stoic calmness. In Gethsemane He struggles with the decision (*Mark 14:32–42*), and on the cross He cries out in despair, " 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' " (*Mark 15:34, NKJV*). The Gospel of Mark shows us the darkness that Christ experienced, the cost of our salvation. But the cross is not the end of the journey. After His resurrection, He plans a meeting with His disciples in Galilee—and, as we know, the Christian church began.

It is a most remarkable story, told in a terse, fast-moving style with little commentary from the Gospel writer himself. He simply tells the story, and then lets the words, the deeds, the actions speak for themselves regarding the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth.

Thomas R. Shepherd, PhD, DrPH, is senior research professor of New Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He and his wife, Sherry, have two grown children and six grandchildren.

How to Use This Teachers Edition

“The true teacher is not content with dull thoughts, an indolent mind, or a loose memory. He constantly seeks higher attainments and better methods. His life is one of continual growth. In the work of such a teacher there is a freshness, a quickening power, that awakens and inspires his [class].”

—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 103.

To be a Sabbath School teacher is both a privilege and a responsibility. A privilege because it offers the teacher the unique opportunity to lead and guide in the study and discussion of the week’s lesson so as to enable the class to have both a personal appreciation for God’s Word and a collective experience of spiritual fellowship with class members. When the class concludes, members should leave with a sense of having tasted the goodness of God’s Word and having been strengthened by its enduring power. The responsibility of teaching demands that the teacher is fully aware of the Scripture to be studied, the flow of the lesson through the week, the interlinking of the lessons to the theme of the quarter, and the lesson’s application to life and witness.

This guide is to help teachers to fulfill their responsibility adequately. It has three segments:

- 1. Overview** introduces the lesson topic, key texts, links with the previous lesson, and the lesson’s theme. This segment deals with such questions as Why is this lesson important? What does the Bible say about this subject? What are some major themes covered in the lesson? How does this subject affect my personal life?
- 2. Commentary** is the chief segment in the Teachers Edition. It may have two or more sections, each one dealing with the theme introduced in the Overview segment. The Commentary may include several in-depth discussions that enlarge the themes outlined in the Overview. The Commentary provides an in-depth study of the themes and offers scriptural, exegetic, illustrative discussion material that leads to a better understanding of the themes. The Commentary also may have scriptural word study or exegesis appropriate to the lesson. On a participatory mode, the Commentary segment may have discussion leads, illustrations appropriate to the study, and thought questions.
- 3. Life Application** is the final segment of the Teachers Edition for each lesson. This section leads the class to discuss what was presented in the Commentary segment as it impacts Christian life. The application may involve discussion, further probing of what the lesson under study is all about, or perhaps personal testimony on how one may feel the impact of the lesson on one’s life.

Final thought: What is mentioned above is only suggestive of the many possibilities available for presenting the lesson and is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive in its scope. Teaching should not become monotonous, repetitious, or speculative. Good Sabbath School teaching should be Bible-based, Christ-centered, faith-strengthening, and fellowship-building.