

**A 6-Week Introduction to the
Transformational Bible Study Method
with the GOSPEL of MARK**

discovering

God's
Word



JEAN WILUND

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**A 6-Week Introduction to the
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with the GOSPEL of MARK**

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**Our Daily Bread
Publishing.**

Discovering God's Word: A 6-Week Introduction to the Transformational Bible Study Method with the Gospel of Mark

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To my children and grandchildren—to a thousand generations
—Bobby, Kaitlyn, Ophelia, Samuel, Brittany, and Carolyn:

I wrote this study for you.
I pray the Lord will use it to bless others, but I wrote it for you.
My heart beats with yours every day.
My thoughts are consumed with prayers for you.
My love for you reaches as high as the highest heavens.

If God allowed me only one prayer for you, I'd pray that you would
know, love, and believe the Lord your God and His Word with all
your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
Forever.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
—Mark 13:31

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Start Here

To best prepare you for this study, I offer one spiritual truth and four recommendations.

ONE SPIRITUAL TRUTH: THE BIBLE IS A SPIRITUAL BOOK

God is the author of His divine Word. To understand the Bible, we need God's Spirit. "For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11).

If you've trusted in Christ for your salvation, you've received His Spirit to guard and keep you and to help you understand His Word.

"Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:12–13).

Anyone who doesn't belong to Christ will struggle to study the Bible effectively. "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

If you're not a Christian, the gospel of Mark reveals the way to salvation in Christ. If you want to talk with someone about how to receive salvation, reach out to me at JeanWilund.com or the people at Our Daily Bread Ministries at odbm.org/about-us/contact-us.

FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Read all of the gospel of Mark.

Reading straight through a book of the Bible before we slow down to study it can help us grasp the overall picture and zero in on the author's main message—the heartbeat of his book that reverberates through the chapters. As you read, strap on a proverbial pair of ancient sandals and step into the setting. Be present with all five senses. Read Mark in a day or two—or over several days. It's a fast-paced read, but there are sixteen chapters. You'll have two days at the beginning of Week One to read all of Mark, but I recommend you get an early start.

2. Understand what this study is and isn't.

Discovering God's Word is two studies in one—a study on how to study the Bible and a study on the gospel of Mark. Because we're examining how to study the Bible, we don't have time to dive deep into every aspect of Mark, but you'll walk away with a firm grasp on the book—and transformed by Mark's message.

3. Discover more Bible study resources at JeanWilund.com.

To enhance this study (and your study of every book of the Bible), I offer additional resources and helps on the *Discovering God's Word* page on my website.

4. Study with a group.

Studying with a group can provide additional accountability and encouragement (Ephesians 4:11–16). You'll find helpful discussion questions and podcast episodes on the *Discovering God's Word* page on my website, JeanWilund.com.

God's Purpose, Call, and Promise for Bible Study

Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.

—Jeremiah 15:16

The Bible is God's divine revelation—the unveiling of who He is, His divine will, and His salvation through Jesus Christ.

God's purpose for Bible study isn't to make us better people—better Christians. Instead, His purpose is to glorify Himself through Christ and His gospel as we come to know Him. “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:36).

God's call is for people everywhere to read His Word to know Him and His salvation (2 Timothy 3:14–17) and to obey Him out of a natural overflow of love for Him (John 14:15). “This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

God's promise for those who belong to Him is transformation as we study and walk in obedience to His Word. “I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

I pray that over the next six weeks, God will glorify Himself through you as His Word transforms you and makes you more like Christ—and fills you with His abiding peace and joy.

WEEK ONE

A Firm Foundation

MARK 1:1–45

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.

—2 Peter 1:3

The bottom corners of the page feature decorative geometric shapes in a light tan or beige color. On the left, there are two overlapping triangles pointing towards the center. On the right, there are also two overlapping triangles pointing towards the center, mirroring the design on the left.

Overview

TODAY'S READING

Read the gospel of Mark over the next few days.

Imagine the thunder of the ocean's waves, the majesty of snow-clad mountains, and the coolness of soft grass under your bare feet. God's soul-stirring creation declares His glory—the glory of their creator. Along with the heavens, they shout His praise from the rising of the sun to its setting (Psalms 19:1; 113:3).

But how do we know where the majesty we see came from?

We know from God's Word. Apart from the Bible, we're left to discern on our own—or through the imaginations of others—the source of creation and the character, nature, and ways of the Creator.

To truly know anything about God, we need His written Word.

To understand God's written Word, we need His Spirit and an understanding of effective Bible study. Earthly minds can never understand the thoughts and ways of the Infinite without all three—God's Spirit, His Word, and an effective way to study it.

We'll use the gospel of Mark to train ourselves to study His Word well while God uses Mark to transform us—if we truly believe and obey what He says.

We'll never truly know the God of the Word apart from the Word of God.

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL BIBLE STUDY METHOD

Before we dive into the details of effective Bible study, let's look at an overview of the three simple steps that form the basis of our study method.

STEP ONE: INTENT

What did God intend His original audience to understand?

The first question in the Transformational Bible Study Method focuses on what God, the true Author, intended the original recipients of His message to understand. Each human author God chose to relay His message wrote directly to an ancient audience, but they also wrote for the benefit of every believer in every generation.

Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20–21)

STEP TWO: TRUTH

What truths does God's Word reveal about the character, nature, and ways of our triune God, and that of anyone or anything other than Him?

When we see the Lord as He truly is, we can then—and only then—rightly view everyone and everything else, including ourselves and our circumstances. This is why the second question focuses us first on discovering the eternal truths about our triune God's character, nature, and ways as He's revealed Himself in Scripture. We also want to learn the character, nature, and ways of sin, Satan, his dominion of darkness, the world, and our human nature—who we are *without* Christ (Romans 8:5–7) and who we are *in* Christ (Romans 8:9–17).

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. (2 Peter 1:3)

STEP THREE: TRANSFORMATION

If I truly believe and act on what God has revealed in His Word, how will the desires and attitudes of my heart transform and my actions be different tomorrow?

God didn't give us the Bible to stuff our heads with knowledge but to transform us into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Our goal isn't to learn how to conquer the Bible but to let the Bible conquer us—to make God's will our will (Philippians 2:12–13). Through this final question, we reflect on the truths revealed through Scripture and ask ourselves what it looks like to rightly respond to them. A biblical response naturally overflows out of belief and into obedience to God's Word, which ultimately leads to authentic and lasting transformation—to loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.” (John 14:23)

HOW DO I RESPOND?

The heavens declare the glory of God, and our lives will, too, when we realize that spiritual transformation isn't a work of our efforts but a work of faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
(Psalm 19:1)

We see God's handiwork on every page of Scripture. The Bible reveals aspects of God's glorious character, nature, and ways on every page—attributes such as

- God is our majestic Creator.
- Jesus Christ is our unfailing Savior.
- The Holy Spirit is our empowering Teacher and Guide.

TRANSFORMATIONAL BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLES

- ✓ Knowing the Bible author's *intent* helps us better interpret God's authoritative *truth*, which leads to authentic *transformation* for all who belong to Christ and believe His Word.
- ✓ Keep the *Intent*, *Truth*, and *Transformation* questions in mind whenever you study the Bible.

MEMORY VERSE

Memorizing God's Word allows Scripture to linger in our minds and sink deeper into our hearts. Write out this week's memory verse and read it aloud five times.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.
(2 Peter 1:3)

Step One: Intent

TODAY'S READING

Continue to read through Mark.

I found a letter in my parents' attic written to my dad. The letter was dated April 13, 1974. The author of the letter begged him for a two-week old kitten. No one signed the letter, but telltale signs give the author away.

GOD'S INTENT

The Bible is a letter of much greater importance than the desire for a kitten. It's a letter from God written *for* us and our salvation, but not written directly *to* us. We weren't the original audience. But from the beginning, God intended their words to benefit us as well.

INTENT QUESTION

*What did God intend
His original audience
to understand?*

Now these things happened **to them** as an example,
but they were written down **for our** instruction,
on whom the end of the ages has come.

(1 Corinthians 10:11)

More than forty human authors wrote, as the Holy Spirit directed them, to the people of their day. As we study the Bible, our goal is to discern each verse's meaning as originally intended.

To help us discover a passage's meaning, we'll consider its context as well as the genre, writing styles, and writing techniques the author used. We'll examine these factors later, but first let's ground ourselves in basic introductory information. We want to learn about the human author, his audience, and the main purpose God gave him for writing.

In today's lesson, we'll gather introductory information for the gospel of Mark.

PRACTICE SESSION: INTRODUCTION TO MARK

To find introductory information, I suggest three search methods.

1. Search the book of the Bible we're studying.

Some authors (such as the prophets and most writers of the Epistles) identified themselves and offered some background information. Mark didn't. The author never signed his name, dated his book, or identified his audience. We can, however, discern his purpose for writing.

- **Read Mark 1:1–3 and Mark 16:6–8 and look for hints at the heartbeat of Mark's gospel.** Some authors allude to their central message at the beginning and end of their book. From these verses, consider what theme or main message Mark might want his audience to understand, and summarize it below. We'll confirm and/or refine our understanding as we study.

2. Search the rest of the Bible.

The Bible is one connected story. A question in one book is often answered in another. The more we read and study the whole Bible, the easier it gets to see its pieces fitting together. Over time, we begin to see more and more connections.

3. Search biblical resources.

Study Bibles and Bible handbooks typically offer book introductions. Some websites offer free book introductions. Let's go to one of these resources now.

Start by going to my website, JeanWilund.com, and clicking on Helpful Resources. (I update these resources to ensure they remain current.) Click on Book Introductions, then click on a link to a resource site. Once there, find and select Mark. Use one or more of the introductions to Mark to answer the following questions.

Author: Who wrote Mark? _____

Date: When was Mark written? _____

Audience: Who was Mark's audience? _____

Purpose: What is Mark's central message? _____

MEET MARK

The author of Mark's gospel didn't sign his book, but he left telltale signs of his authorship, freeing us to confidently call it the gospel of Mark rather than the gospel of We Don't Know. First-century church leaders unanimously attributed this gospel to Mark. They knew him. The early church met in his mother's home (Acts 12:12).

Mark wasn't one of the twelve disciples, but it's believed he witnessed Christ's ministry and served as the apostle Peter's assistant in Rome. He first served as a missionary assistant to Paul and Barnabas—but then deserted them (Acts 15:37–40). Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the devoted discipleship of Peter, God transformed Mark into a faithful servant of Christ (2 Timothy 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13).

Mark wrote to gentile Christians in Rome to encourage this persecuted church to pick up their cross and follow their king, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Son of God and Son of Man, who came not to be served but to serve, suffer for their salvation (and ours), and defeat Satan and his dominion of darkness.

HOW DO I RESPOND?

Of all the men God could have chosen to write this gospel account, He chose Mark, a man who'd failed to be faithful—like Peter, the man who discipled him. Simon Peter denied Christ three times. Christ

transformed both Peter and Mark from failure to faithful by the power of the Holy Spirit and the truth of His Word.

Do you ever feel frustrated in your faithfulness to Christ or to Bible study?

Do you struggle to live out what you say you believe?

Whatever your struggle, let Mark's (and Peter's) story encourage you. Christ restores, equips, and empowers His children. It's never too late to be transformed.

Now that we've solved the mystery of the gospel of Mark's author, let's solve the mystery of my 1974 kitten letter. The telltale signs point to me as the author. I recognize my handwriting at age nine. Sadly, I failed to accomplish my will. I didn't get the kitten. Mark's letter, however, continues to accomplish God's will—as does all of God's Word. "He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

- List your biggest struggles in studying the Bible. Is it time? Desire? Lack of faithfulness to follow through? Pray and ask God to help you overcome these struggles.



TRANSFORMATIONAL TRUTH

It's never too late to be transformed. Christ restores, equips, and empowers His children.

Step Two: Truth (Part 1)

TODAY'S READING

Mark 1:1–11

In *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer writes, “What comes to mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

I couldn't say it better.

THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD

What we think about God determines what we think about everything else. He's our starting point for viewing everything in life. The better we know Him, the less deceived we are about everything else. He reveals truths about Himself on every page of the Bible. As we study it, questions like the following help uncover what we need to know about God:

- Do we see the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit at work in this passage? If so, what truths or attributes does their work reveal?
- What, if any, aspects of the gospel or Christ's coming kingdom does the passage display?
- Are any names or titles of the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit mentioned in the passage? If so, what do they teach us?

TRUTH CHART (T-CHART)

The first time I read through the Bible, I began to list on paper truths I saw in Scripture about God. Soon after, I drew a line down the middle

TRUTH QUESTION

What truths does God's Word reveal about the character, nature, and ways of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

of the paper and began to list on the right side any key truths I noticed in Scripture about everything and everyone else.

With lists of truths on both sides of the paper, I could compare and contrast God with everyone and everything else—and I had discovered the power of the T-chart. These comparisons and contrasts helped me understand God (and everyone else) more clearly, which led to my being better able to faithfully interpret and respond to Scripture.

Bullet point key information and truths into columns under keyword headings that reflects the main “character(s)” in the passage. Look for connections and spiritual truths to pop off the page. In the sample T-chart below, I’ve listed helpful tips.

TRIUNE GOD	OTHERS
<p>IDENTIFY: FATHER, SON, AND/OR HOLY SPIRIT</p>	<p>FOR EXAMPLE: PHARISEES/SCRIBES</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the left side of the chart, I note truths or key information the passage contains about God the Father, Son, and/or the Holy Spirit. • If a verse or passage doesn't mention God, I leave it blank. We never want to force information into the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the right side of the chart, I note truths or key information the passage contains about anyone and/or anything else other than God. • If I wonder about a point, I note my question and find the answer later, either in Scripture or in a commentary. • If a verse or passage only mentions God and not <i>others</i>, I leave this side blank. We never want to force information into the text. • The fewer the words, the better.

The T-chart is a simple tool to help us better see connections and truths as we study. Being a visual processor, I often use different colored pens or highlighters to draw arrows and circles as I compare and contrast the information. My charts are a jumble of scribbled notes, but they help me better interpret the Scriptures. Keep it simple, and don't chain yourself to the chart, but don't underestimate its helpfulness either. (See my website for printed blank templates: JeanWilund.com.)

PRACTICE SESSION: MARK 1:1–11

INTENT

- Heralds in ancient Rome announced the arrival of their king at the city gates.
- John’s clothing and ministry resembled that of Old Testament prophets.
- The Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Malachi prophesied John the Baptist’s ministry (Isaiah 40:3–5; Malachi 3:1; 4:5).

TRUTH

Read Mark 1:1–11. As you read, step into the wilderness. Imagine Mark as an ancient Roman herald proclaiming Christ’s long-awaited arrival. “Hear ye! Hear ye! It has begun! What all creation has longed to see since the serpent’s temptation in the garden has begun—the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

Imagine Isaiah’s voice speaking from the past. Stand at the edge of the Jordan as John baptizes Jesus. Watch the Holy Spirit descend and listen to the voice of the Father from above.

On the left side of your T-chart, note what Mark reveals about our triune God. (We’ll talk about the right side, “Others,” tomorrow.)

I’ll start. You add.

TRIUNE GOD	OTHERS
<p>FATHER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God¹ = <i>theos</i> (Greek) = the Supreme Divinity • Fulfilled Scripture by sending John the Baptist to prepare for Jesus • Initiates salvation • Keeps His promises 	
<p>JESUS (SON)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus² = <i>iēsous</i> (Greek) = Joshua = “Yahweh is salvation” • <i>Yahweh</i> is God’s relational, promise-keeping name • Christ³ = <i>christos</i> (Greek) = <i>Messiah</i> (Hebrew) “anointed” or “set apart” • God set Jesus apart to save us 	
<p>HOLY SPIRIT</p>	

You'll see I used a concordance to look up the original meaning of names and titles for Jesus. To access a free *Strong's Concordance*, visit the Helpful Resources page at JeanWilund.com for links to websites that offer free concordances.

TRANSFORMATION

What comes to your mind when you think about God?

Many Christians have too few thoughts about Him—or wrong ones—because they've lost (or never understood) the importance of reading and studying the Bible. May we determine to read and study God's Word every day and proclaim God's glory and gospel to the world like Mark. "Hear ye! Hear ye! The gospel of Jesus Christ!"



TRANSFORMATIONAL TRUTH

**What we think about God determines
what we think about everything else.**

Add to your Attributes of God list at the back of the book.

In true herald fashion, write a proclamation about our triune God. Include truths Mark reveals about God in today's passage and consider what it will look like in your life if you truly believe these truths.

Hear ye! Hear ye! . . .

TRANSFORMATIONAL BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLES

- ✓ Truth Question, Part 1: What truths does God’s Word reveal about the character, nature, and ways of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
- ✓ As you study, create T-charts of truths God’s Word reveals about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

MEMORY VERSE: 2 PETER 1:3

Write out this week’s memory verse.



Spread the Word by Doing One Thing.

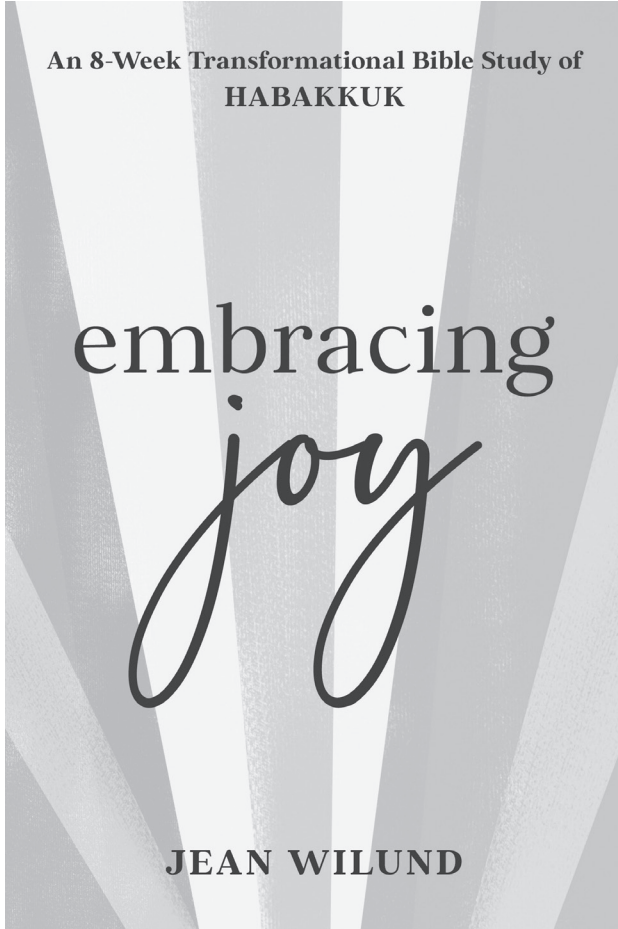
- Give a copy of this book as a gift.
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- Write a review of this book on your blog, favorite bookseller's website, or at ourdailybreadpublishing.org.
- Recommend this book to your church, small group, or book club.



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“When God first saved me, I hungered for His Word. I wanted to understand this new salvation I’d received. But over time, reading and studying my Bible grew to be a wearying chore.”

When Jean Wilund reached her breaking point, God moved her to change the way she studied the Bible. Almost overnight the task became exhilarating. You can experience that too.

This six-week introduction to Jean’s three-step Transformational Bible Study Method will revolutionize the way you read God’s Word. Break away from a stagnant Scripture reading experience and dive deeper into the life-changing truths of the Bible—starting with the gospel of Mark.

Jean Wilund is a forty-year Bible student, Christ follower, wife, mom, and gigi. Jean is passionate about helping women fall more in love with God and His Word. She writes regularly for Revive Our Hearts. Check out her articles and videos on her website, JeanWilund.com.



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