



# A New Teaching— with Authority!

MARK 1:21-28

They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

Mark 1:22

# Gather

## CHECK IN

Since this is our first session, we'll begin with a get-to-know-you activity. Be prepared to share the following:

1. Your name
2. Why you decided to join this Together by Grace Bible Conversation
3. The name of a teacher who was influential in your life and what that person taught you

Take a moment to write a few sentences about why that teacher was influential in your life.

## OPENING PRAYER

**O God, source of all goodness: Bless our study, that it might be a space of learning and safety where we are both teachers and students of each other. Challenge our minds and nurture our hearts; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.** (Adapted from *ELW*, p. 78)

## COMMUNITY-BUILDING

For this first session, the community-building activity will occur in two parts.

1. Read the Group Covenant on page 9 to yourself. After everyone has had a chance to read, the facilitator will invite a volunteer to read the goals out loud. Then, everyone will read the guidelines out loud together, embodying the “we” of the covenant.
2. Review what you wrote about your influential teacher. If you feel called to share with the group, please do so when the facilitator invites you.



## Dwell

### DWELLING IN THE WORD

Keep your influential teacher in mind as you read the text for this session.

#### **Mark 1:21-28**

<sup>21</sup>They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. <sup>22</sup>They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. <sup>23</sup>Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, <sup>24</sup>and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” <sup>25</sup>But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet and come out of him!” <sup>26</sup>And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. <sup>27</sup>They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” <sup>28</sup>At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

## CONVERSATION

1. Imagine that you are one of the people in the synagogue at Capernaum and this episode is the first time that you've heard Jesus.
  - ♦ What is your first impression of Jesus? How does this scripture text make you feel?
  - ♦ Have you ever been astounded by a speaker at an event or a guest preacher in your church? If so, what astounded you?
  - ♦ What are some expectations that your community has for guests? How would your community react to someone performing the actions that Jesus does in this passage?
2. Geography plays a critical role in the Gospel of Mark. Capernaum was a small fishing village in a region called Galilee, on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jerusalem, the capital city of the province of Judea, was some distance away to the south. Find both locations on the map “Key Locations in Jesus’ Time” in the back of this guide (p. 79).
  - ♦ Think about the dynamics between small towns and big cities and capitals in your own context. Are they friendly or are they antagonistic?
  - ♦ What might it mean for Jesus’ first deed to take place in a small town so far from the capital? How might people in the capital react when they hear the news of what Jesus has done?



*This mosaic was found on the floor of a fifth-century-CE synagogue. It depicts a ram and a jar of wine for sacrifice, as well as a pair of shofars, the trumpets used in temple worship.*

3. This text describes Jesus as a teacher “with authority” (v. 27).

- ◆ What kind of teacher is Jesus? What role does authority play in his teaching?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ◆ How have different teachers in your life used their authority either positively or negatively?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ◆ In what ways do Jesus’ teaching and authority bring good news in this text, and for whom?

4. List the different characters in this scripture text below. (Note: “They” in Mark 1:21 refers to Jesus, Simon, Andrew, James, and John.)

- ◆ How does each person or group react to Jesus? Is anybody’s reaction left out of the text?
  
- ◆ Which character(s) or group(s) in this text do you identify with? Have you always identified with that role, or is their experience speaking into something about this particular time in your life?

## Engage

### WORD AND SERVICE

In the upcoming week, I would like to take the time to learn more about this aspect of the scripture text: \_\_\_\_\_

### WORSHIP AND PRAYER

1. Reflection: Has this text inspired you to pray for anyone? Are there other situations on your mind?

2. Silent intercession



3. Devotional hymn: “Unexpected and mysterious,” ELW 258, stanzas 1 and 3
4. Closing prayer: **Almighty God, you have enriched your church with Mark’s proclamation of the gospel. Give us grace to believe firmly in the good news of salvation and to walk daily in accord with it, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (ELW, p. 55)**

## SESSION RECAP

This session introduced us to Jesus’ ministry in the Gospel of Mark. We got a glimpse of the crowd’s reaction to Jesus as a teacher and to his power as an exorcist, setting up some of the key themes (and mysteries) that we will explore throughout these sessions. We reflected on the teachers who have had an impact on our own lives, and we began to learn about the importance of place in the Gospel of Mark.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GOING DEEPER

- 🌿 Retell the story from this session in your own words and then read the scripture text again. What details have stuck with you the most? Were there any details that you missed? If you shared the story with someone else, how did they react? Did they ask any questions or offer a new perspective?
- 🌿 Pantomime the actions of different characters in this text. How do you think they held their bodies or moved through the space of the synagogue?

- ✦ Research the layout of an ancient synagogue (searching online for “first-century synagogue” is a great place to start) and draw a sketch of the floorplan. Where might Jesus and the other characters in this story have been standing? What might the view have been like for someone in the crowd?
- ✦ Read more in the Gospel of Mark. Pick and choose from this list or read one passage a day.
  - ◆ Mark 1:1-8
  - ◆ Mark 1:14-20
  - ◆ Mark 2:1-12
  - ◆ Mark 2:18-22
  - ◆ Mark 3:1-6
  - ◆ Mark 3:7-12
  - ◆ Mark 3:20-28
- ✦ Reflect on what you experienced in this session. Here are a few prompts you might use to reflect or journal.
  - ◆ What is the importance of authority in teaching? When is authority helpful? When can it be harmful? How is Jesus’ authority different than worldly authority?
  - ◆ How would you define the demonic in the modern world? How does Jesus’ work speak into our contemporary understandings of evil? Where does this scripture text support those understandings? Challenge them?
  - ◆ Reflect on first impressions that you’ve made in your life. When have you made good or bad first impressions? How did those first impressions affect your relationships going forward? What sort of first impression does Jesus make in this scripture text with the gathered crowd? With the man with an unclean spirit? With you?

## LOOKING AHEAD

In the next session, we get a glimpse of the contents of Jesus’ teaching and our first introduction to the perplexing world of parables.

