

“Which is easier?” -Mark 2:9

Find a quiet place to begin. Take a few deep breaths. Ball your hands up into a fist and think about all of the frustrations, irritations, and worries of the day. Now take a long slow breath. As you release your fists, ask God to take away your anxiety and frustration of the day, and open your heart and mind to the study of his word.

Read Mark 2:1-12

1. Where was Jesus in this story and what was he doing?
2. Who was with Jesus in the story and what interesting thing happens with the paralytic?
3. It says when Jesus saw their faith (the paralytic and his four friends) what did he do/say?
4. Are you surprised that Jesus didn't heal the man first of his ailment? Why or why not?
5. How did the scribes react to this?
6. If only God can forgive sins, then what does Jesus insinuate about himself here?
7. After Jesus heals the paralytic, what did all the witnesses say? What was their reaction?
8. Is this an appropriate reaction? What does Jesus have authority to do from this passage?

Read Mark 2:13-17

1. Who did Jesus call to follow him, and what was his profession?
2. So far Jesus has called five men to follow him. From what we know, what type of men are they?
3. Who was Jesus associating with at Levi's house?
4. What do the scribes and Pharisees think about this?
5. Does it surprise you that Jesus is among these people? Why or why not?
6. What types of people has Jesus come for? What type does he say?
7. If Jesus lived among us today, where from this passage do you think we might find him?

Read Mark 2:18-22

1. What happens in this section?
2. When Jesus is questioned about fasting, how does he respond? Does he give a direct answer?
3. What are the metaphors Jesus uses here? (hint: there are three)
4. What do you think this means?

Read Mark 2:23-28

1. What day of the week does this story occur on?
2. Why is the Sabbath so important?
3. Did Jesus and his disciples break the law by plucking grain to eat on their day of rest?
4. For reference, see 1 Samuel 21:1-6
5. What conclusions can we make about the Sabbath from this passage?
6. What additional area does Jesus claim to have authority over?

Defining the “Bible-y” Words:

Capernaum: Recall this is a city located on the Northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus makes Capernaum his headquarters of sorts. He focuses much of his ministry here.

Blaspheme/Blaspheming: The act of showing contempt or disrespect to God by saying he is something or someone else other than God. Accusing him of being unholy (or another way to put it is to assume that God is like us. AKA Fallible.)

Tax Collectors and Sinners: Their version of the IRS. No one wants the IRS after them. No one actually enjoys giving money to the government, especially an oppressive government like Rome. In those days, not only were tax collectors symbols of the oppression, they often took bribes and robbed people of their money as well. So tax collectors were not the most well-liked individuals of Rome. Nobody really likes a tax man. Sinners can be defined here as people who did not keep God’s law given to the Jews. The law is also called the Torah. So when Mark says tax collectors and sinners, he really means to say a bunch of worthless, good-for-nothing-no-account scoundrels (as my grandpa might say.)

Fasting: This is straight from Wikipedia- *“A ta’anit, or ta’anith in Classical Hebrew is a fast in Judaism in which one abstains from all food and drink, including water. A Jewish fast may have one or more purposes, including: A tool for repentance. An expression of mourning.”* Many Jewish people, especially the Pharisees regularly participated in fasts. In Jewish culture, there were a few fasts that the whole Jewish community practiced, like Yom Kippur, but often Pharisees did much more than that.

Sabbath: Recall that The sabbath was a Jewish day of rest. Jews were not permitted to do any work on this day. They went to synagogue and worshipped on this day. Jewish Sabbath began Friday at sunset and ended on Saturday. So when the Pharisees accuse Jesus and his disciples of doing what is unlawful, they were implying that Jesus and his disciples were working on the day God commanded his people to rest.

Just a quick word:

I’ve meditated long and hard on how Jesus responded to the question about fasting. Jesus doesn’t explain himself clearly, but this is the beginning of the scribes and pharisees accusing Jesus of not following their laws given to them by God himself. The Jewish people were anticipating a Savior who would come and establish a new kingdom- one where the Jewish people did not live under the thumb of the Roman empire. If I could paraphrase Jesus in my own words: Look you guys have been doing your best to follow the customs and traditions of Israel. But enough of that! I **am** the King who is establishing a new Kingdom, but I’m not doing it the way you think! I am new! I bring new teachings, healings, miracles- and I’m trying to show you that this whole thing is about a relationship with me. It’s not just religion anymore. You’re used to the old ways, but I’m bringing you a new way. And it’s cause for celebration!

