

STEP ONE PRAY for the Holy Spirit to reveal God's Law and Gospel themes to you.

STEP TWO READ the Bible passage repeatedly until you can retell it in your own words.

Mark 1:29-39 ²⁹As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. ³²That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. ³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.



STEP THREE REVIEW a Bible Commentary to understand the passage's common meaning.

Taking up from where he left off in last Sunday's Gospel (Mk 1:21-28), Mark is working with the same kind of situation. The pentecostals, or "enthusiasts," carried a powerful influence in the earliest days of the church. Mark is trying to correct this one-sided emphasis on miracles by putting them in the context of Jesus' preaching. One of the hallmarks of charismatic movements is the attempt to ride the miracle out of ordinary, everyday life. Believing that Christ's miracle-working power is given to them in the Holy Spirit, the charismatics regard themselves as being in a time when all the stresses and strains of ordinary life are replaced by a miraculous kind of peace and joy. Mark doesn't fight this kind of thinking by trying to pull the rug out from under the miracles. In our Gospel, he records several of them -- the healing of Simon's mother-in-law (vv. 29-31), healing, and exorcisms (vv.32-34). Like the charismatics, Mark recognizes the miracles as instances of Christ's freeing power. But unlike the charismatics, Mark doesn't stop there. The purpose of the exchange between Jesus and the disciples in vv. 35-30 is to tell us that Jesus didn't stop there, either. Seeing the acclaim and recognition that Jesus had won in Capernaum, the disciples expected Jesus to stay in the town and continue what he'd begun. But when they got up in the morning, they found that Jesus had left them. Pursuing him, they found him in a lonely place, praying (v. 35). "Everyone is searching for you," they said,

indicating that they expected him to return (v. 37). But Jesus turned the tables. "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also," He said, "for that is why I came out " (v. 38). Saying this, Jesus told the disciples his purpose: to spread the good news, preaching and teaching throughout Galilee. Seeing the miracles and the kind of recognition they provided, the disciples wanted to stay in Capernaum, riding Jesus' miracle-working power out of their everyday, humdrum existence into a more glorious kind of life. But Jesus wouldn't hear of it. "I must go and I must preach," he said in so many words. "That is my purpose." And later, when the disciples were more ready for it, he told them more "I must die" (see Mark 8:31). He insisted on preaching the word and going to the cross. Jesus' manifestation did not take place on the heights, in a superearthy realm of glory, but in the depths: in towns like Nazareth and Capernaum with common, ordinary, everyday people. And it tells us that Jesus' real epiphany was not in the miracles, glorious as they were, but in the word of the cross and finally in the cross itself. The miracles are like illustrations, pointing away from themselves to Christ and the cross.

STEP FOUR IDENTIFY GOD'S LAW

As you reread the passage, keep asking...*How does God's Law in this passage point out what I am unable to do without Christ?* It may be helpful to underline those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Law. If God's Law is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Law: *Illness, like death, is our common lot. Our disobedience of God's law consigns us to death.*

God's Law message for me is:

STEP FIVE IDENTIFY GOD'S GOSPEL

As you reread the passage, keep asking...*How is God's Gospel (Christ crucified and risen) in this passage freely offering me a new life with God?* It may be helpful to circle those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Gospel. If God's Gospel is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Gospel: *We have been given faith (trust) in Christ to see us through death.*

God's Gospel message for me is:

STEP SIX PRAY

Pray that the Holy Spirit might:

- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's death to change what I am doing or not doing.
- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's resurrection for me to live a new life with God.

Meditation Words: "lonely place" "prayed" "preaching"