Where to Start

A free sample of Understand the Bible: which book to read first, the one-page guide to Mark, and the first three guided days.

- Where to start
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Plain Bible Guides follow the Protestant Bible of 66 books: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New. We stay with what the text says and explain it plainly, without teaching the doctrine of any one denomination.

Bible quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), which is in the public domain. Passages are given by chapter and verse, so you can read them in whatever Bible you have.

Where to start

You do not have to start at Genesis and read straight through. Many readers find it easier to begin with a story about Jesus, then go back to the beginning.

A SIMPLE FIRST PATH

1. **Mark** (New Testament file). The shortest Gospel: the life of Jesus in 16 chapters.
2. **Genesis 1 to 12** (this file). How everything began and the promise to Abraham.
3. **Psalms** (this file). Prayers and songs for every kind of day.

The file Your First 30 Days walks you through exactly this path: about 15 minutes a day, background first, then the passage, step by step.

BEFORE EACH NEW BOOK

Read its page in this guide first. It takes two minutes, and the book will make more sense.

Mark

The shortest Gospel: a fast-moving account of what Jesus did, who he is, and why he died.

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

Mark starts with John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism, then moves quickly through healings, teaching and conflict in Galilee (1:1-45). Halfway through, Peter says Jesus is the Christ (8:29). From there Jesus heads for Jerusalem, telling his friends he will suffer, die and rise again (8:31; 10:33-34). The last chapters cover his final week, his death and the empty tomb (11:1-16:8).

SETTING

When	Jesus' life; written in the first century AD, dates vary
Where	Galilee, then the road south to Jerusalem
Written by	Traditionally John Mark; the book names no author
First readers	Probably non-Jewish readers: it explains Jewish customs (7:3-4)

WHERE IT FITS IN THE BIBLE STORY

Mark begins with words from the prophets about a messenger who prepares the Lord's way (1:2-3; Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3). Jesus says the time has come and the kingdom of God is near (1:15). He calls himself the Son of Man, a title from Daniel's vision (14:62; Daniel 7:13).

KEY PEOPLE

Peter a disciple who says Jesus is the Christ Mark 8:27–33

James and John brothers who ask for the best seats Mark 10:35–45

Pontius Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified Mark 15:1–15

Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb and finds it empty Mark 16:1–8

START WITH THESE THREE PASSAGES

1. **Mark 1:1–20** The good news begins and Jesus calls fishermen.
2. **Mark 8:27–38** Who Jesus is, and what following him means.
3. **Mark 16:1–8** The women find the tomb empty.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY

Mark keeps asking who Jesus is (4:41; 8:29). As you read, what answers do people give?

My notes on Mark

How the days work

Each day takes about 15 minutes. You need this page, a Bible in any translation and a pen.

1. **Background first.** Read the short note on what is going on.
2. **Now read** the passage in your Bible.
3. **Walk through it.** Look back at the two or three things to notice.
4. **Think it over.** Answer the question in a few words.
5. **Pray** the one line, if you wish, and tick the box.

A FILLED-IN EXAMPLE (DAY 1)

If Jesus invited you to follow Him today, what would you find hardest to leave behind?

Probably my phone in the morning. I could start with ten quiet minutes first.

Missed a few days, or starting late? Carry on from the next unticked day. Nothing is lost, and there is no catching up to do.

An Invitation to Follow

BACKGROUND FIRST

Mark introduces Jesus as God's Son (1:1). John prepares the way, and Jesus begins announcing God's kingdom in Galilee, a region in northern Israel (1:4-15). Fishermen leave their work to become His followers (1:16-20). As you begin, watch both what Jesus does and how people respond.

NOW READ

Mark 1

> "Come, follow Me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."
> Mark 1:17 (BSB)

WALK THROUGH IT

1. Before Jesus calls anyone to follow, the voice from heaven names Him as the beloved Son. His identity comes before His public work. Mark 1:9–11
2. Simon, Andrew, James and John leave their fishing work when Jesus calls. Following begins with a response, not a full explanation. Mark 1:16–20
3. Jesus makes time for prayer, then keeps moving to preach elsewhere. Crowds and healing do not replace that purpose. Mark 1:35–39

THINK IT OVER

If Jesus invited you to follow Him today, what would you find hardest to leave behind?

My answer

PRAY

Jesus, help me listen to Your invitation and take one honest step toward You.

☐ Read and done Date _____

Authority to Forgive

BACKGROUND FIRST

Yesterday Jesus called fishermen and healed many people (Mark 1:16-34). Back in Capernaum, a lakeside town, He faces questions about forgiveness, meals and the Sabbath, the weekly rest day (2:1-28). Watch the growing tension: His welcome draws some people close and unsettles others (2:13-17).

NOW READ

Mark 2

> On hearing this, Jesus told them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
>
> Mark 2:17 (BSB)

WALK THROUGH IT

1. Jesus addresses the paralyzed man's sins before healing his body. The healing answers the challenge about His authority to forgive. Mark 2:5–12
2. Levi is a tax collector. Jesus calls him and eats with people the religious teachers avoid, comparing His work to a doctor's care. Mark 2:14–17
3. In the dispute about picking grain, Jesus presents the Sabbath as a gift for people and claims authority over it. Mark 2:23–28

THINK IT OVER

Which part of Jesus' welcome surprises you, and why?

My answer

PRAY

Jesus, help me receive Your mercy and make room for people I might overlook.

☐ Read and done Date _____

Crowds, Conflict and a New Family

BACKGROUND FIRST

The Sabbath dispute now becomes a confrontation in a synagogue, a Jewish place of worship (3:1-6). While opponents plan against Jesus, crowds gather and He appoints twelve apostles, people He will send out (3:7-19). Even His family struggles to understand Him (3:20-21). Yesterday's questions are becoming open conflict.

NOW READ

Mark 3

WALK THROUGH IT

1. Jesus restores a man's hand while His opponents watch for a charge against Him. Their response is to begin plotting His death. Mark 3:1–6
2. The Twelve are appointed first to be with Jesus, then to preach and drive out demons. Their work grows out of being with Him. Mark 3:13–15
3. Jesus calls those who do God's will His family. The people sitting around Him hear an invitation to belong. Mark 3:31–35

THINK IT OVER

What might it look like to spend time with Jesus before trying to do something for Him?

My answer

PRAY

God, give me a listening heart and a place among those who do Your will.

☐ Read and done Date _____

What is in the full guide

These pages come from Understand the Bible: every book explained + 30 guided days. The full guide has:

- A one-page guide to each of the 66 books, Genesis to Revelation, in the same pattern as the Mark page here.
- All 30 guided days: the rest of Mark (Days 4 to 16), Genesis 1 to 12 (Days 17 to 23) and seven Psalms (Days 24 to 30).
- Three editions of every page: US Letter, a Bible tip-in edition (5.5 × 8.5 in pages, two to a US Letter sheet, with 5 × 7 in trim marks) and a tablet edition.
- A one-page print guide.

It is an instant digital download from plainbibleguides.com. Nothing ships.