

Explore the Bible: Questioned

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: Bible lessons like this one have been an important part of the Baptist Standard for many years. Each has a cost of at least **\$50** to produce. To ensure these lessons continue to be provided the rest of 2023 and into 2024, you can **make a donation** in any amount by visiting [our donation page](#). In the comments field, note your donation is toward the cost of Bible studies.*

The early chapters of Mark contain many occasions in which people question Jesus' words or actions. Jesus is a challenge to the way Jews understand their faith. The test for each questioner is:

- "Do I welcome Jesus' message?"
- "Is Jesus a threat to our world?"

In moments that revealed Jesus' power, Jesus requests demons, miracle recipients and disciples not tell others who he is. They know him.

If the larger public begins identifying Jesus as the Messiah *now*, people immediately begin setting in motion operations based on who they imagine the Messiah will be. This could result in the raising of armies, groups of camp followers trailing Jesus, scribes publicizing Jesus' every word—not always accurately—and politicians, even Romans, getting involved. People would be too busy with their agenda to pray or listen to Jesus.

Questioned: Forgiver of Sins? (Mark 2:1-12)

Jesus is back in Capernaum. He is preaching to a large crowd overflowing from a house into the street. Four men bring their paralyzed friend to

Jesus. They cannot get in. Undeterred, they tear a hole in the roof and gently lower their friend to Jesus.

Jesus stops talking. He acknowledges the four men for their faith. He speaks to the man on the mat who cannot move, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

No one in the room speaks. Jesus knows there are teachers of the Law present who are questioning his assumption of sin-forgiving authority reserved for God. Jesus speaks aloud to their thoughts. "Is it easier to forgive sins or to tell this man to pick up his mat and walk? The Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth."

Jesus turns to the man, saying: "Get up. Take your mat. Go home." The paralyzed man probably rises awkwardly, struggles a little with his mat and shuffles toward the door. People in the room openly praise God. Only God can forgive sin.

Questioned: Partying with Sinners? (Mark 2:13-17)

Still in Capernaum, Jesus goes out to Sea of Galilee where he finds Levi (Matthew) sitting at a tax collector's booth. Jesus says, "Follow me," and Levi does. Later, Jesus enjoys a meal at Levi's house. Pharisees complain that Jesus feasts with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus responds, "I have not come to call righteous but sinners." Pharisees seem to have taken an interest in monitoring Jesus' activities.

Questioned: Failing to Fast? (Mark

2:18-20)

Pharisees complain Jesus' disciples do not fast. Fasting is a practice of faithful Jews; a person gives up something significant like food, a hobby or a habit for a season. The less busy believer gains time to seek a closer presence with God.

In defending his disciples, Jesus points to a wedding celebration. No one fasts there, because the groom is present. His disciples do not need to fast, because they have the groom with them. Nothing impedes the disciples' closeness with Jesus.

Questioned: Breaking Sabbath Law? (Mark 2:23-28)

Pharisees confront Jesus when his disciples break Sabbath laws picking a few heads of grain. He responds, "The Sabbath was created for people." Does pulling an apple off a tree on the Sabbath break God's Law if a person is observing the day with worship and rest? Scrupulously obeying onerous rules imposed by Sabbath enforcers creates work and interrupts rest. Jesus says, "People were not created for the Sabbath."

Questioned: Our Boy at Risk? (Mark 3:20-21, 31-34)

The scene is another full Capernaum house, with a crowd so large Jesus and disciples cannot eat. Jesus' family panics. They fear Jesus is not thinking rationally.

They may have been thinking:

- This year, Jesus left home and a good carpenter job.
- He has lost weight and looks exhausted.
- Jesus now associates with unemployed fishermen, tax collectors and sinners.
- He is being disrespectful to the Sabbath.
- Jesus is challenging established practices.
- They fear the situation is getting out of control and are afraid of Jesus getting hurt—or worse.

Mary and his brothers go to get Jesus. They will take him home and protect him until he can think clearly. They send someone into the house to call him, saying, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.” Jesus looks at those seated in a circle around him and says “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

Questioned: Controlled by a demon? (Mark 3:22-30)

Teachers of the Law come from Jerusalem to see Jesus. Discrediting Jesus is their goal. They have given little thought to their talking points. “He is controlled by a demon. That is how he casts out demons.”

The teachers think they are dealing with a small-town newcomer. They have not yet gotten serious about accepting or rejecting Jesus as Messiah and Savior. Jesus’ calm response is one of simple logic. He says, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” It is an act of love on his part. Peter remembers this conversation when he and Mark later write Mark’s Gospel. They have a peace about documenting Jesus’ severe warning against blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

NOTE: Mark 3:22-30 passage is too abstract and mature for children. Children are concrete thinkers: what they can see, hear, feel or

experience. Bible stories with action, memory verses about concrete actions, things, people and the Ten Commandments are ideal for child learning.

Glen Funderburk has taught children's Sunday school for many years. These lessons on the Gospel of Mark are written from the perspective of children.