

# **Equip: Resources on the Gospel of Mark**

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The Gospel of Mark has spent much of church history overshadowed by its larger counterparts Matthew, Luke and John. Because Mark is much shorter than the other Gospels, many mistakenly have concluded the second Gospel doesn't have much to add. Therefore, Mark's unique portrayal of Jesus has been neglected for far too long.

In the past century or two, however, there has been something of a renaissance for the Gospel of Mark. Most scholars now believe Mark was written first and that Matthew and Luke heavily used Mark's account when composing their own Gospels.

At the congregation where I pastor, Trinity Baptist Church in Orange, we worked through a sermon series on Mark. And a few years before I came to Trinity, when I was teaching adult Sunday school at First Baptist Church in Waco, we studied Mark's Gospel there. Here are resources I have found most helpful.

## ***The NIV Application Commentary* by David Garland**

David Garland's volume on Mark in the *NIV Application Commentary* series is quite simply a masterpiece. As you probably can guess from the title, the *NIV Application Commentary* is not tailored toward professors and other academics. Rather, this series is designed for preachers, Sunday school teachers and regular Christians who want to study the Bible more deeply.

But make no mistake: David Garland is one of Baptists' most respected

New Testament scholars of the past 35 years, and his rigorous, careful scholarship undergirds every page of his volume on Mark.

At the same time, years of experience teaching in the classroom and the local church have given Garland the ability to take scholarship and present it in accessible ways, even to those who never have set foot inside a seminary.

This commentary series also has a unique layout. Each portion of the text is covered under three headings: “Original Meaning,” “Bridging Contexts” and “Contemporary Significance.” This unique format allows the author to dive deeply, not only into what the text most likely meant to its original readers, but how Christians today can apply the text faithfully in our own contexts.

Full disclosure: I am a former student of Dr. Garland’s, so I definitely am biased. But I am more than happy to recommend his *NIV Application Commentary* on Mark as one of the most helpful resources money can buy.

## ***The Pillar New Testament Commentary*** **by James Edwards**

The *Pillar New Testament Commentary* series is a bit more advanced than the *NIV Application Commentary* series, but still is accessible to most readers. You don’t need to know Greek to make use of the *Pillar New Testament Commentary*, and while James Edwards’ volume on Mark may require a bit of mental elbow grease to get through if you don’t have prior training in biblical studies, it is well worth the effort.

When evangelical New Testament scholars give recommendations regarding biblical commentaries, James Edwards’ commentary in this series almost always is listed near the top of recommendations for Mark.

While Edwards clearly has a thorough knowledge of the original Greek, of the historical and cultural backgrounds, and of the other ancient literature written around the time of the New Testament, this technical information never bogs down his commentary. Edwards' writing is clear, engaging and accessible. Edwards is especially helpful for understanding Mark's theology.

This volume and David Garland's *NIV Application Commentary* entry on Mark were the two main sources I used when teaching Sunday school, and both commentaries served me immensely well. If you are studying Mark for personal edification or to teach others in the church, get this commentary and Garland's.

## ***The Zondervan Exegetical Commentary*** **by Mark Strauss**

If you open this commentary and see a bunch of untransliterated Greek text, you may panic and worry this volume by Mark Strauss is too advanced for you.

Yes, the *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* is more advanced than the previous two commentaries listed and will be most helpful to those with some level of formal training in biblical studies and Greek. Nevertheless, Strauss's work is invaluable for studying Mark, even if you haven't studied the New Testament in an academic context.

While the *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary* series includes the Greek text and other technical information the average reader may not understand, it is formatted in such a way that you can skip over sections you don't fully grasp and move on to sections you do.

Most of the content in this work is still accessible to average readers,

particularly given Strauss's great writing style. The "Theology in Application" sections are especially helpful for applying the text.

If you have the commentaries by Garland and Edwards, you should be set. But if you want to add another commentary, or if you want to go a bit more technical than the first two commentaries allow, Strauss's work is an excellent addition. I used it throughout my latest sermon series on Mark and love it.

Also, Strauss has a very distilled, simplified version of his commentary [available](#) for free online through The Gospel Coalition.

## Honorable Mentions

The late, great R.T. France's entry on Mark in the *New International Greek Testament Commentary* is a tour de force and is widely lauded as a masterpiece by various scholars. However, the *New International Greek Testament Commentary* is an advanced, technical commentary requiring at least some knowledge of Greek. If you've had training in Greek, France's commentary is invaluable.

Robert Stein has written a volume on Mark in the *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* which, while not quite as technical as the *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, is still pretty advanced.

Stein also has written a brief book on Mark 13, the most difficult chapter in the Gospel, titled *Jesus, the Temple and the Coming of the Son of Man*. If you've ever been perplexed by Jesus' reference to "the abomination of desolation" (13:14) or his claim "this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place" (13:30), Stein's book is for you.

Finally, Mark Dever, senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in

Washington, D.C., has dozens of excellent sermons covering the entirety of Mark's Gospel, which you can listen to online for free [here](#).

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