



STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, March 15, 2026

Teaching Title: Friend of Sinners

Key Scripture: Mark 2:1–17

CEDAR VALLEY

5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

Monday: Mark 5:1-20

Tuesday: Mark 5:21-43

Wednesday: Mark 6:1-29

Thursday: Mark 6:30-44

Friday: Mark 6:45-56

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's Word (The Bible), what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

MEMORY VERSE:

Ephesians 2:13 NLT

But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

Introduction:

This week we continue exploring who Jesus is in the Gospel of Mark. Up to this point, Mark has emphasized Jesus' authority—authority in His teaching, in casting out demons, and in healing the sick. In Mark 2, we see that Jesus also has the authority to forgive sins. As a result, His popularity continues to grow and word about Him spreads quickly. Yet at the same time, conflict with the religious leaders begins to increase as Jesus challenges their traditional customs and practices. He not only forgives sins but also shares a meal with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus demonstrates a kind of holiness that moves toward broken people rather than avoiding them. Mark 2 reveals two common responses to Jesus: those who feel too sinful to come to Him and those who struggle to extend grace to others. Yet the same grace that saved us is meant for everyone. Jesus truly is a "friend of sinners"—the One who forgives our sins and calls us in.

Questions:

Ice Breaker: Have you ever had a friend do something really unexpected to help you when you needed it most? What happened?

1. Read Mark 2:1-17 together. What do you notice about Jesus in this passage? What do you learn about Him?
2. Mark 2:5 | Why do you think Jesus addressed the man's sin before his physical condition? What does this reveal about humanity's deepest need?
3. Mark 2:6-7 | What does this moment reveal about Jesus' identity? (See Notes)
4. Mark 2:8-12 | How does the miracle function as evidence of Jesus' authority, and why is forgiveness the main point of the story?
5. Mark 2:13-14 | Why would this invitation have been shocking to the people around Jesus? What does

Levi's immediate response show about true discipleship?

6. Mark 2:16-17 | What does this statement teach about who Jesus came for and how people must see themselves in order to respond to Him?
7. In the passage we see two groups: people who feel too sinful to come to Jesus and people who feel too righteous to extend grace to others. *Which of these tendencies do you see more easily in yourself, and why?*
8. If Jesus truly is the "friend of sinners," what would it look like for our church or small group to reflect His heart toward people who feel far from God?

NOTES

Question 3—

The teachers of the law are right! They make a theologically correct statement here. Though priests may pronounce forgiveness, only God could forgive sins. Micah 7:18 says:

*Where is another God like you,
who pardons the guilt of the remnant,
overlooking the sins of his special people?
You will not stay angry with your people forever,
because you delight in showing unfailing love.*

DIGGING DEEPER

Question 6—

"Pharisees were careful about eating habits (e.g., all food must first be tithed) and valued religiously edifying conversation. More generally, people viewed table fellowship as establishing a covenant of friendship (indeed, in one ancient story, two warriors stopped fighting each other when they discovered that their fathers had shared a meal!). By eating with sinners Jesus thus appears to endorse them. Scripture warned against spending time with the ungodly lest one be influenced by them (Ps. 1:1; 119:63; Pr. 13:20), but Jesus is influencing them rather than the reverse."

—Keener, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*. IVP: Downers Grove, 2014.

Why does Jesus refer to Himself as the "Son of Man"?

In the Old Testament, Ezekiel was called "son of man". This appears to be an affirmation of the frailty of his human nature as well as a call for Ezekiel to be very humble in the calling he had on his life. Some scholars think "son of man" is a term that carries a range of meaning – like suffering, vindication, and judgment. Therefore, Jesus may have used this term to indicate unity with humanity. However, according to Daniel 7:13, "son of man" is more than just an affirmation of Jesus' humanity. This passage became shorthand for the Messiah – the anointed one who would come to be the bring God's kingdom. Daniel 7:13 says,

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man,^[a] coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

In this passage, the "son of man" is distinct from God (the Ancient of Days) but is also worshipped and given authority. So, this "son of man" is human but also God!

According to NT Wright, "Jesus was thus able to use the phrase as a cryptic self-designation, hinting at his coming suffering, his vindication, and his God-given authority." (Wright, *Mark for Everyone*).