

The ALIVE! Bible Study Series
STUDY AND REFLECTION GUIDE FOR SESSION 3
“COMMITMENT” Mark 1:29-38

OBJECTIVES:

- To learn the importance of prayer for guidance
- To become more aware of what is influencing you to pull you away from your ALIVE! goals and what influences support for your ALIVE! goals
- To reinforce the importance of recalling your vision that caused you to make the commitment to abundant living

INTRODUCTION:

The Gospel according to the Book of Mark is the shortest of the gospels. It tells story after story of Jesus’ ministry – his healings and the controversies around his healings and teachings. Mark’s message of total commitment of Jesus to do as much as he could while he could is evident. Our Lord and Savior knew that he would die because he taught and demonstrated a new thinking about God – *“A man with leprosy came to (Jesus) and begged him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’”* (Mark 1:40-41) Early in Mark’s gospel, in Chapter 3, we read for the first time about how *“...the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus”* (Mark 3: 6) after he healed the crippled hand of a man on the Sabbath.

Your scripture for this session addresses Jesus’ commitment to follow through on his purpose for being born into humanity. Jesus never backed down from his commitment and his mission, even when he knew its cost. **This Session 4 is about Jesus making a conscious choice and making a commitment to follow through on his purpose for humanity.** It is unlikely that you will have to endure the level of such trials and tribulations that Jesus did on your way to your new day of healthier lifestyle behaviors for an abundant life of new energy and strength. **Jesus’ declaration to commit to his mission does, however, point you to the mindset you need to move into your vision for what you want to accomplish.** To God be the glory.

BACKGROUND:

The Book of Mark does not begin with a birth narrative for Jesus as do the Books of Matthew, Luke, nor even The Book of John who focuses on the divinity of Jesus. Rather the Book of Mark begins with John the Baptist, who is an earthly relative of Jesus. John is the son of Elizabeth who is a relative of Mary (Luke 1:36). John is preaching in the desert and many come to hear him and are baptized. He states, *“After me will come one more powerful than I ... I*

baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” Here is the first indication of the power of the man – Jesus – who is to come.

Jesus comes to John’s revival and is baptized by John in the Jordan (*Mark 1:9*). Jesus was not baptized because he needed to repent of any sin, but rather to show his joining with humanity to be a part of them, to share their concerns, to heal their afflictions and to bring peace to troubled souls. As Jesus came up out of the water and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove, Jesus heard a voice from heaven saying, “*Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” (*Mark 1:11 KJV*) This was Jesus’ confirmation that it was time to begin his mission for humankind. After this, “the Spirit” sent Jesus into the desert for 40 days. There, Satan tempted him on three separate occasions. (*Matthew 4:1-11, and Luke 4:1-13*) The Gospel of Mark does not go into detail about the temptations but does state that “...*he was with the wild animals and the angels attended him.*” **Like Jesus, when you are tempted to pull or move away those things you need to continue for better health and energy, it is important to be mindful of the “angels” around you that give you strength for the journey. When you pray and trust, God sends “angels” – people, a situation that blesses you, or a song or lesson – that brings you back to focus.** (Remember Session 2, Psalm 139: 10, “... *Your (God’s) hand will guide me. Your right hand will hold me fast.*)

After his forty days in the desert, Jesus went to Galilee preaching and teaching, “*The time has come...The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!*” (*Mark 1:15*) The kingdom of God is not only some faraway place you hope to reach after you go to glory. *Rather, the kingdom is in you when you trust and believe the love of God manifested in Jesus Christ.*

In Galilee, he called four disciples – Simon (later named Peter) and his brother, Andrew, and he called James and his brother John. They traveled to Capernaum where on the Sabbath he began to teach. While there, a man possessed by an evil spirit cried out to Jesus. Jesus did not want the man to say who he was, for the evil spirit recognized Jesus’ power. Jesus exorcised the demon, and told the demon to be quiet. *NOTE: Jesus did not want the people to know of his powers because the Pharisees considered exorcism to be something magicians did. Jesus’ ministry had nothing to do with magic but with the power of God moving through him for absolute miracles.*

Just as Jesus was starting a new mission for his life, so you too are starting something new that will be good news for your health and for any other issue you may want to tackle. Work within a small covenant group of those who are also on the journey of new life while you are changing your mindset and behaviors that will bring you new vibrancy. **Stay mindful of negative thoughts that will invade your spirit and consciousness when you are not progressing as fast as you would like. Trust God and trust the process. Your body, mind, and spirit may have some adjustments to make. Just like Jesus, trust the God Spirit in you to keep you encouraged.**

MARK 1:29-38

- **Mark 1:29-34** -- When Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue, they went to the home of Simon's mother-in-law who was "*in bed sick with a fever.*" Jesus healed her and she got up and "began to wait on them." (*As the woman of the house, this would be her pleasure and not her burden.*) The word got out to the community that Jesus had healed Simon's mother-in-law. That evening people brought the sick and demon possessed in the town to the house where Jesus healed them. Again, Jesus would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. ***Likewise, when you want to make some change in your health or in any area of your life, it may be best not to give too many people your plan at first because they will watch your every move and critique your every action. Your plans may not go as smoothly as you want at first. So, while you need cheerleaders and support as you improve your skills and behaviors, keep your covenant circles of supporters small initially while you explore and practice the behaviors and mindset you need for your new way of being and doing.***
- **Mark 1:35** – Early the next morning Jesus got up before dawn and left the house to find a solitary or deserted place where he prayed. This was the first large gathering of people where God's power came through him to heal many and exorcise demons. Throughout the gospels we read time and again how **Jesus went off by himself to pray and to replenish his energy after ministering to many.** At times he also took his disciples with him for a while. ***How do you replenish after a busy event at church or at work?***

Prayer was very special to Jesus because it was time with his Father. (*May everyone feel this way about prayer.*) The scripture does not say what he prayed about on this particular occasion. Prayer brings clarification and right thinking. Is it possible that Jesus was asking God for clarification about his mission? Was he asking if he misunderstood his mission? After all, there was plenty of work to do for his gifts and talents right there around Capernaum. Was he to stay there and develop his ministry and have people come from all over the region for teaching, preaching the Good News, and healing?

- **Mark 1:36-37** – Simon and his companions go "hunting for" or "pursuing" Jesus. The verb used, *katadioko* means to "*hunt him down*" so to speak. You might understand why they were very invested in finding him when they say to Jesus that "***Everyone is searching for you!***" **The implication is that people wanted more of him – more healing, more teaching and more preaching.**

When your pastor or a guest preacher delivers a strong message and the Spirit is very high in the church service, people want more and more of the Word and of the activities that bring them healing and new hope for a brighter tomorrow. So it must have been



with what the people of the town experienced of Jesus, and they wanted more and more and so his disciples *hunted him down*.

- **Mark 1: 38-39** – Simon and his companions may have been very surprised at Jesus’ response when he said, *“Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I preach there also. That is why I have come.”* **This reply by Jesus may sound very harsh because you know Jesus to be a Savior who is compassionate and loving.** Yet, Jesus is not interested in going back to Simon’s mother-in-law’s house where everyone is looking for him. **It seems that Jesus has gotten clarity from his time alone in a deserted place where he prayed to his Father. It seems that Jesus is clear about his mission now. He is to preach, and teach, and heal and die that he may rise with all power from his Father, God Almighty. Jesus actions demonstrate of strong commitment to God and to his focus to accomplish his goal of securing eternal life for you and all humanity.** Jesus stayed focused on the reason for his birth into humanity. **He was not persuaded to forsake his calling, his mission for the sake of what others wanted, but rather stayed focused on what God sent him to do, even to his horrific death on the cross.**

For you, others may have their agenda for how you live your life, or have their perceptions of who you are and what you are capable of doing. How do you handle their wants, needs, and opinions in order to keep your commitment to your abundant life goals?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

It is easy to get confused about your priorities when you are trying to do something to help yourself. You may wonder if you have the right to put your needs before others’. Why is it important not only for you but also for those whom you love and who love you that you consider your health important? What negative thoughts come to mind when you want to eat a particular way or take time to go for a walk or go to the gym for a workout? What can you say to yourself to counter those negative thoughts? What do you say to yourself to counter the negative attitudes and statements by other people? Do you include these concerns in your prayer time?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (small groups of 2 or 3 people)

1. What blocks you from doing for yourself what you need to do to feel more energy or more relaxed and healthier?
2. Do you recall the first time you read verse 38 when you read the words of Jesus saying essentially “No” to going back to the village where people were waiting for him? What might have happened if he went back?



3. Do you consider the spiritual and physical energy on your pastor or guest preacher when he or she is preparing spiritually for worship and preaching and how depleted of energy he or she may be after worship? Is Sunday a Sabbath for your pastor? Yes or no and why?
4. Knowing that everyone was waiting for Jesus to come back, what would you have said to Jesus if you were one of his followers? Would his explanation of “This is why I have come” been sufficient for you?
5. Share with those in your small group what happened when you dared to do something that you felt you needed to do for yourself when others wanted you to be with them or to do what they were doing for whatever reason. Were you as strong as Jesus in your response to their pulling on your spirit? Why or why not?
6. What must be the **first thing you do in setting your process** for making time for what you need to do for your health when others pout or say negative things about the vegetables you are eating or the time you are spending in exercise or walking?

FEEDBACK FROM THE SMALL GROUPS

CLOSING REMARKS AND PRAYER