



ERSKINE
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

For Christ and His Church

DN 925CO

The Gospel of Mark and Contemporary Discipleship

Fall, 2011

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a study of Mark with particular emphasis on the theme of discipleship. Students examine Mark's witness to Jesus and especially the radical nature of discipleship that is presented in this Gospel and its implications for life today. Students devise their own theology of Christian discipleship. Emphasis is given to creative ways of using Mark to teach discipleship in the church.

(Revised, Tentative)

ELECTIVE (Norms). Three hours credit.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

"The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church." (ETS 2010-2011 Catalog, p. 6). Christian service is the living out of Christian discipleship. A study of Jesus' teachings about discipleship as they are revealed in Mark is a direct expression of the Seminary's mission.

More specifically, by the end of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Define *Gospel* as a literary form and describe its uniqueness among first-century literary forms;
2. Summarize briefly how the Gospel of Mark has been interpreted in the church from the Early Church Fathers until the present time;
3. Describe the likely historical circumstances that gave rise to the Gospel of Mark and summarize its likely purposes;
4. Outline the basic structure of the Gospel of Mark;
5. Describe the view of Christian discipleship that is shown in Mark and illustrate it with specific passages from the text;

6. List and describe aspects of current American culture that resist the view of discipleship as it is found in Mark;
7. Assess discipleship as it is perceived and practiced in the student's local ministry setting in light of discipleship in Mark;
8. Analyze a contemporary discipleship movement in light of discipleship as it is presented in Mark;
9. Describe his/her own theology of Christian discipleship;
10. List and summarize major works of importance in the study of Mark and in the study of Christian discipleship.

III. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required textbooks. As a convenience, the seminary has a bookstore portal of the website at <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>. There you will find links to familiar vendors (CBD, Amazon, B&N, and Books-A-Million) and can check availability of texts, compare prices, and place orders. The ETS SBA will receive a modest percentage of the profits from students' and professors' purchases through this portal. The Erskine Campus Bookstore will carry a limited number of copies of every required text and orders for books can be placed through the Campus Bookstore.

Each student is required to purchase the following books for the course.

James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. **ISBN 9780-8028-3734-9**

Werner H. Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979. **ISBN 9780-8006-1355-6**

Ronald J. Kernaghan, *Mark*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007. **ISBN 9780-8308-4002-1**

In addition, each student will need a New Testament in the translation of his/her choice. Students who work with Greek are encouraged to use the Greek text.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Students must attend every class meeting. If a student must be absent for all or part of a session, he/she is responsible for all work done and due for that session. Normally, a student who misses all or part of a session will be required to do additional work. This must be negotiated with the professor. **A student who misses more than a total of one session will not pass the course.**

2. Students must be adequately prepared for each class session. Adequate preparation consists of completion of all reading and/or writing assignments for that day. Much of the format of this course will be lecture-discussion. Thus, it is imperative that each student be adequately prepared in order to participate in an informed manner in classroom discussions.
3. Students may occasionally be given short, informal research-type assignments on which to report back to the group. These are voluntary and will not be graded. Nothing written is required to be turned in.
4. **Two short papers will be required.** See the **COURSE OUTLINE** for the due dates and subject matter of these papers.
5. **One major paper will be required.** This paper will be a combination of an exegetical study of a pertinent passage from Mark as well as an analysis of a contemporary discipleship movement from the perspective of discipleship as it is presented in Mark. A guide-sheet for this paper will be provided. **The finished copy of this paper is due no later than Friday, December 9.**
6. All work must be turned in on time. **Work that is late may be penalized at least one letter grade.** The professor reserves the right to reject any work that is excessively late.
7. The student is encouraged to keep a loose-leaf notebook for class and reading notes, hand-outs, etc. This notebook, if done well, may provide the student with much valuable teaching and preaching material on Mark for future use.
8. The student should review basic seminary policies which are pertinent to this course. To review these policies, the student should go to the following website:
http://seminary.erskine.edu/content_policies/SeminaryPoliciesforETSStudents.pdf
9. My fall office hours are posted on my office door (Office 20). It is best for the student to make an appointment before coming.

V. EVALUATION

The Seminary grade scale (ETS 2010-2011 *Catalog*, p. 46) will be used. The student's final grade will be calculated as follows:

Paper # 1	=	25%
Paper # 2	=	25%
Major Paper	=	50%

VI. CLASS MEETING DATES

This class will meet from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the following days:

- Session 1: Saturday, September 10**
- Session 2: Saturday, October 8**
- Session 3: Saturday, November 5**
- Session 4: Saturday, December 3**

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1: Saturday, September 10

Course introduction, requirements, procedures, etc.

I. An Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

- A. Mark among the Synoptics
- B. Unique features of Mark
- C. Interpretative problems with Mark
- D. The literary genre of “Gospel”
- E. How do we study a Gospel?
 - 1. Source criticism
 - 2. Form criticism
 - 3. Redaction criticism
 - 4. Narrative criticism
- F. Mark in the history of the church
- G. A possible setting for Mark
 - 1. Authorship
 - 2. Date
 - 3. Recipients
 - 4. Purposes
- H. The basic structure of Mark

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 1:

1. Read the Gospel of Mark in a translation of your choice. Note any unusual features, distinctive emphases, peculiarities, etc.
2. Read James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, pp. 1-21.
3. Read Ronald J. Kernaghan, *Mark*, pp. 15-25.

Session 2: Saturday, October 8

II. Discipleship Amidst Competing Claims

- A. Introduction
- B. An analysis of Mark 1:1--8:21
 - 1. The Prologue: the basis of Jesus' authority (1:1-15)
 - 2. The authority of Jesus and its effects in Galilee (1:16--3:6)
 - 3. Truth hidden and revealed: parables and miracles which bind and set free (3:7--6:6a)
 - 4. Hard hearts and lack of faith (6:6b--8:21)
- C. Discipleship passages in Mark 1:1--8:21
 - 1. The "call" stories -- 1:16-20; 2:13-17; 3:13-19
 - 2. The "insider" stories -- 4:10-13; 4:35-41
- D. Significant persons in Mark 1:1--8:21
 - 1. Jesus
 - 2. The crowds
 - 3. The Pharisees
 - 4. The Twelve
 - 5. Jesus' family
 - 6. The demons

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 2:

1. Read carefully Mark 1:1--8:21.
2. Read James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, pp. 23-241.
3. Read Ronald J. Kernaghan, *Mark*, pp. 27-153.
3. Write a paper (**Paper # 1**) on the topic "The Picture of the Disciples in Mark 1:1--8:21." Write the paper in response to the guide-sheet provided for it.

Session 3: Saturday, November 5

III. The Radical Way of Jesus

- A. Introduction
- B. An analysis of Mark 8:22--16:20
 - 1. The way of the Cross: teaching on discipleship (8:22--10:52)
 - 2. The King comes to Jerusalem (11:1--13:37)
 - 3. The story of the Passion of Jesus (14:1--15:47)
 - 4. The Resurrection (16:1-8)
 - 5. The ending(s) of Mark (16:9-20)
- C. The radicality of Jesus' way
 - 1. The place of the Cross
 - 2. Self-denial
 - 3. Redemptive suffering
 - 4. The disciple's stance toward the world
 - 5. Discipleship and community
 - 6. Discipleship and the end of the age
 - 7. Discipleship and the Resurrection
 - 8. Discipleship and "being afraid"
- D. An analysis of Werner H. Kelber's *Mark's Story of Jesus*

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 3:

1. Read carefully Mark 8:22--16:20.
2. Read James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, pp. 241-508.
3. Read Ronald J. Kernaghan, *Mark*, pp. 153-344.
4. Read Werner Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus*, pp. 11-96. Write an analysis of this book (**Paper # 2**) in accord with the guide-sheet provided.

Session 4: Saturday, December 3**IV. Contemporary Forms of Discipleship**

- A. Introduction
- B. Formal discipleship groups in the church
- C. Denominational discipleship programs
- D. Contemporary discipleship movements
 - 1. Navigators
 - 2. Campus Crusade for Christ
 - 3. InterVarsity Fellowship
 - 4. Fellowship of Christian Athletes
 - 5. Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Life*
 - 5. Other movements
- E. How do we teach Mark's radical way of Jesus?

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 4:

1. Be prepared to give an informal report on your study of a contemporary discipleship movement.

MAJOR PAPER DUE ON DECEMBER 9.

GUIDE-SHEET FOR PAPER # 1

1. This paper should be no more than 10 pages long.
2. Read carefully Mark 1:1--8:21.
3. Describe the picture of the 12 disciples that Mark present here. Support your description with references to the text of Mark.
4. In particular, how do you understand the “call” stories in this part of Mark? Specifically, what did Jesus call these men to be and to do? How did the disciples seem to understand this call?
5. Consider the major events that Mark describes in this section of his Gospel. How do the disciples react to them? What is their likely understanding of the things Jesus is doing, saying, and experiencing?
6. What does this section of Mark teach us about the nature of Christian discipleship?

GUIDE-SHEET FOR PAPER # 2

1. This paper should be no more than 10 pages long.
2. Read Werner Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus*.
3. **Introduction:**
 1. According to Kelber, what is the probable historical backdrop for Mark?
 2. What is Kelber's thesis concerning the purpose of Mark in relation to Jesus' journey?
4. **Chapter 1:**
 1. According to Kelber, how is the Kingdom shrouded in mystery in 1:1--4:34?
 2. Who are the “insiders” here?
 3. What do Jesus' rapid geographical movements in this section tell us about the Kingdom?
5. **Chapter 2:**
 1. Indicate how the series of boat trips in 4:35--8:21 gives a measure of logic and unity to this section.
 2. What is the relation between the exorcism in 5:1-20 and that in 1:21-28?

3. What is meant by the Markan technique of “insertion?” Give one example from this section of the Gospel and show the effect that Mark causes with it.
 4. In what way does the episode in 7:1-23 settle the Gentile issue?
 5. What feature in the story of the feeding of the 4,000 in 8:1-9 indicates that this is the Gentile equivalent of the earlier feeding? What is Mark saying about the Kingdom in these two episodes?
 6. How have the disciples emerged in this section as the opponents of Jesus?
6. **Chapter 3:**
1. Set forth the evidence that Mark has structured the midsection of his Gospel around “the way” motif.
 2. What is the significance of the two healings in 8:22-26 and 10:46-52?
 3. In what way are the eyes of the disciples opened in this section?
 4. In what sense is 8:27-33 a “confrontation between Jesus and Peter?” What does this episode accomplish in Mark’s story?
 5. What is meant by “power in service?”
7. **Chapter 4:**
1. Explain Mark’s framing technique in 11:12-25. What does he mean to communicate by this story?
 2. What function does the widow’s offering in 12:41-44 serve in Jesus’ teaching, according to Kelber?
 3. What is the relationship between the Temple and the Kingdom in Jesus’ teaching, according to Kelber?
 4. Explain the relationship between Jesus’ speech in Mark 13 and the situation of Mark’s readers.
 5. What does Mark do for his readers by finishing chapter 13 in the way that he does?
8. **Chapter 5:**
1. How does the mention of Galilee in Jesus’ speech to the disciples in chapter 14 connect with Galilee earlier in Mark’s story?
 2. What is the real issue at stake in Gethsemane between Jesus and His disciples? Explain the conflict.
 3. Explain how Mark shows how Jesus paradoxically fulfills His royal mission by the way the term “king” is used in chapter 15.
 4. Why does Kelber think that it is logical for Mark to end his story at 16:8?
9. **Conclusion:**
1. In one paragraph, summarize Kelber’s thesis about what Mark is trying to accomplish in his story of Jesus.
 2. Discuss in detail the strengths and weaknesses of Kelber’s thesis.

GUIDE-SHEET FOR PAPER # 3 (MAJOR PAPER)

1. This paper should be no more than 20 pages long.
2. This paper consists of 3 parts. In Part I, articulate your own theology of Christian discipleship. Do this by choosing a passage in Mark that best represents your understanding of discipleship. Consider questions like these:
 - a. What is a disciple?
 - b. How does your view of discipleship grow out of your understanding of who Jesus is?
 - c. What is the disciple's relationship to the world?
 - d. How does your view of the church connect with your understanding of discipleship?
 - e. How does your own model of ministry relate to your view of discipleship?
 - f. How is the disciple to conduct his/her life in the world?

In this part of the paper, be sure to show in what ways the passage from Mark reflects your view of discipleship.

3. Part II of the paper is the description of a contemporary discipleship movement. You may choose one that we consider in class in the last session of the course, or you may choose another one. You may consider a denominational organization, program, curriculum, etc. What you choose to study is up to you. It needs to be an intentional attempt to teach Christian discipleship in the current context.

In your description, you need to consider items such as these:

- a. Origins and history of the movement/program
- b. Specific objectives/purposes of the movement/program
- c. Methods of the movement/program
- d. View of discipleship that is reflected in the movement/program
- e. People for whom the movement/program is designed

You should include as a part of your description any texts, materials, etc. used in this movement/program. Make your description complete enough so that a person who is totally unfamiliar with this movement/program could understand it totally from what you say.

4. Part III of the paper is an analysis of this attempt to teach Christian discipleship. Consider: (a) the strengths and weaknesses of this approach and especially (b) how this approach relates to discipleship as it is presented in the Gospel of Mark. Be specific here in your analysis. Illustrate your analysis with specific references from Mark as well as the materials which are used in this movement/program.

Complete this part of your paper with a succinct statement of what you have learned from this analysis and how you can use what you have learned in your current ministry setting.