



Michael Eaton, the author of *Preaching Through the Bible*, was a preacher and writer who grew up in inner-city London but lived for many years in Nairobi, Kenya and worked with Chrisco Fellowship. Michael became a Kenyan citizen in 1992; his wife Jenny was born, raised and still lives in Kenya.

Michael had degrees from the universities of London, Zambia and South Africa. He undertook Old Testament work at Tyndale House, Cambridge, published as the *Tyndale Commentary on Ecclesiastes*. His doctoral research was on the Christian and the Mosaic law (republished and updated in 2011 as *No Condemnation - A Theology of Assurance of Salvation*).

He had a longstanding connection with Westminster Chapel in London and wrote scholarly work on the Puritans and on the theology of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He lectured in the Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa (Old Testament exegesis), in the Nairobi Evangelical School of Theology (Old Testament studies and systematic theology), and in the Nairobi International School of Theology (exegetical methods). However, his main work was that of a preacher and he pastored the well-known churches, Lusaka Baptist Church and Nairobi Baptist Church, as well as pioneering multi-racial ministry in Johannesburg. From 1986 he was one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship of Churches, which began as a prayer meeting in 1978, but now has churches in different parts of Africa, India and Europe. Michael was co-pastor, with his friend Jeremiah Mugala, of Chrisco Central Church in the Kibera slum suburb of Nairobi.

Michael's unique and distinctive contribution was his ability to begin with rigorous academic study of the Bible texts and then produce practical and straight-forward expositions to encourage ordinary people in their Christian lives. Although based in Africa, his writing and recorded teaching continues to be a blessing to the church worldwide. For more information see www.michaeleaton.org which has details of all Michael's publications.

This study guide incorporates the text of the first nine chapters of his *Preaching Through the Bible - Mark* published in 1998. The study guide as a whole has been produced by Chris Moffett, Director of Sovereign World Trust (the original publishers of the book), with input and advice from Calvin Eaton, Michael's son, who is active in supervising his late father's teaching legacy. Three more volumes are planned to complete the Gospel. A workbook on Romans is also planned.

More individual *Preaching Through the Bible* chapters are available at www.slices.org.uk and the whole of the New Testament has been collected together in a single volume - *The Branch Exposition of the Bible* - which is available for purchase at www.langhamliterature.org/books/the-branch-exposition-of-the-bible-volume-1 .

Introduction to the Reader

Written for whom?

Welcome to this workbook, the first of two on Mark's Gospel, covering *chapters 1:1 to 9:1*. This introduction explains how it can help you and how you can get the maximum benefit from it.

Probably the first and most obvious question is *for whom is this workbook intended?* The answer is that it is for the leaders of tomorrow's church in those parts of the world where training materials are scarce or unaffordable. But leaders don't appear overnight. The majority today are still at school; and this book has been written to provide something to help them *now* for the days ahead.

But it is not intended to be confined to those of school age. It is also deliberately aimed at a broad variety of older readers, especially those for whom English is a second language or who may not have had the opportunity to complete a great deal of formal education.

Beyond these groups, it also has something to stretch those who have an appetite for more. Educators would use the word 'differentiated' to describe this spread.

Perhaps you would describe yourself as someone young in the faith and not really thinking too much about the future. You may even find the whole idea of being a leader quite intimidating. In that case just enjoy getting to know more about Jesus.

Perhaps you are preparing to be a leader and you find the thought of taking on responsibility rather scary. Maybe you are a leader and have a thirst for knowledge and understanding and a desire to grow in your faith. Whichever applies, *this workbook can help*. You could use it on your own. You could work through it with someone else. You could work through it as part of a small group.

How should it be used?

This is the first of four workbooks covering the whole of Mark's Gospel. It is designed to be used alongside two other books. First and most important the Bible itself, and in particular Mark's Gospel. Secondly, Michael Eaton's ***Preaching Through the Bible*** (PTTB) which has been incorporated into this workbook for ease of reference, but is also available in 'Slice' format from **www.slices.org.uk** or indeed in ***The Branch Commentary - New Testament***.

The questions explained

A word of explanation on the questions may be useful. Some of the questions are very straight-forward. You will find them very easy. The correct answer can be found in the gospel text or the PTTB chapter. Their purpose is to stimulate you to *read the text closely*. This is important whoever you are. One of the things that teachers in schools often find themselves saying is "...*read carefully*." Focussing on the text, paragraph by paragraph, will help you to check your basic understanding and not to miss anything - something so easily done by readers. For these questions you will be asked to supply a missing word or underline a correct phrase. When lawyers read documents (and for them an accurate reading is absolutely essential), they often track the text with a pencil to make sure they don't miss anything.

Other questions, requiring a little more thought, ask you to say *true or false* from a list. These check and confirm your *understanding* of what you have read.

Other questions are not quite so straight forward and need yet more thought. They are more open-ended and the answers cannot be lifted straight from the texts. These questions will stimulate you to *process* what you have understood - perhaps to see how it can be *applied* or how it links with other truth. They will appeal to those who are used to reading more widely and who have had the opportunity of secondary education and beyond. They are best used when working with a study partner or in a group.

By the time you have worked through the book you could be in a position to take someone else through it the first time. So the workbook becomes your training tool. If you do this you will certainly gain more benefit yourself as you revisit the chapters.

How can the Gospel of Mark contribute to leadership development?

Although written for leaders and potential leaders, this workbook is not about the nuts and bolts of *how* to be a leader. There are other good books that cover that. Nevertheless, Mark has a very important contribution to make, which may not perhaps be immediately obvious.

Simply put, Jesus is *the leader of leaders*. He is *our* leader. He is the person we follow. As we follow Jesus others follow us. Learning about the kind of person Jesus is helps us to depend on Him, to follow Him and to do things *His way*. In Mark's Gospel we see Jesus, our leader, in action. We can only be good and effective Christian leaders when we ourselves are being led by Jesus.

In the New Testament, as the church grew and leaders were appointed, an important qualification was Godly character (read, for example, in *Acts 6* how the seven were full of the Holy Spirit and wise, and Paul's advice to Timothy on appointing elders in his letters). Of course, leaders need to be competent and gifted to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. But the primary qualification is one of character. Reading Mark's gospel helps us to absorb and cultivate the character of Jesus. With the help of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit His character can be reproduced in us. We share His motivation and aims and as Mark particularly presents Him, His *friendliness* to others (see chapter 5). This is important because sometimes religious people can come across as severe and judgemental. Jesus did not come to point out all our faults and failings. He brings good news. He forgives. He heals. He blesses. He helps. He equips.

Another aspect of Jesus that Mark particularly brings out is that of the *obedient Son*. Obedience is the characteristic of the true disciple and follower of Jesus Christ. Mark's Gospel shows us the outworking of Jesus' obedience during His ministry. He is our role model. A Christian leader is someone who seeks to obey God.

Success in leadership

An important question to consider is how leaders should think of *success*. How should it be measured? In the world of business and education people talk about *success indicators*. In popular culture, the numbers of followers, the number of sales, the size of the budget or visible material benefits are often seen as measures of success. But we need to be careful not to import these ideas into God's work.

Judged by these criteria, Jesus was not a success. The enthusiastic crowds turned against Him. He had no slick and glamorous organisation. He was not materially prosperous. He died a criminal's death. But He was very successful because He accomplished the will of His Father. He overcame all Satan's enticements in the wilderness and lived a life of faithful obedience. God was pleased with Him and said so from the heavens and indeed God raised Him from the dead. Mark's Gospel illustrates for us the true measure of success which is *faithfulness to the will of God*. It is important that leaders know and understand this.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul explains that one of the functions of leaders is to *'...equip God's people'* for works of service. This is precisely what Jesus did as described by Mark. Success in leadership is to enable others to understand and grow and in the fullness of time, when they are ready, take on responsibility

themselves. Sometimes leaders try to hold on to people because it gives them a sense of significance. That is not the Jesus way. Releasing others to go and serve God themselves is the way the kingdom grows.

Getting the most benefit

You'll get most from this workbook if you approach your study in a relaxed, prayerful and *unhurried* manner. Cultivate a dependence on God, the Holy Spirit, as your teacher. Take your time. Stop and reflect often. Turn your thoughts into prayers. Make use of the space for notes to jot down thoughts and questions that come to you.

The first step should be to read the relevant section of Mark's Gospel at least twice. Please resist the temptation to short-cut this. All scripture is God breathed (the very last thing Michael Eaton would have wanted would be to use his books to replace your Bible). Then read through the chapter from *Preaching Through the Bible*, also a couple of times. At this stage your workbook should be *firmly closed*. When you have done this turn to the workbook and read the objectives frame at the beginning of the section. This will alert and prepare your mind. You will almost certainly be feeling that you have already grasped some of the key points. What comes next will help you to consolidate and to digest it.

1. Read the Bible passage 

2. Read the PTTB chapter 

3. Answer the questions 

4. Check your answers 

We recommend that you write your answers in pencil so that you can change them if needed. Complete the workbook a section at a time and *check your answers at the end of each section*. In most cases the words can be extracted from the PTTB book or the gospel itself. Pay particular attention to those you do need to change because these are your *learning points*.

If you're working with a study partner or in a small group it is good to clarify things through discussion. Learning is a shared experience. Hold on to those things that stand out. Commit verses to memory where they speak to you. You could write them on pieces of paper or card and keep them in your pocket to refer to through the day. The final part in each section, **For further thought and discussion**, contains open questions designed to bridge the world of the New Testament and yours. We hope you will enjoy thinking about these things.

Study group Leaders' Manual

A special leaders' manual has been prepared with possible responses and additional comments for the questions in the **For further thought and discussion** sections. There is insufficient space for these in the individual workbooks so they have been combined into one book together with other comments, suggestions and advice for those taking small groups through these studies.

And finally...

We do hope you enjoy using this workbook. Feedback is always welcome. Later editions will be adjusted and improved. The second workbook covering *Mark 9:2 to 16* is in preparation.

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