ONE COMPLETE WEEK · FREE FOR PASTORS AND LEADERS

SCENE FIVE · MARK 1:29–39

# He Doesn't Heal Everyone

*The same scene three ways—preached on Sunday, opened in your group midweek, read by everyone through the week.*

FORMING DISCIPLES THROUGH THE STORY OF JESUS

More Like Jesus

LEONARD A. WILSON · INVITE PRESS

WHAT YOU'RE HOLDING

# One scene of a twelve-book walk through Mark.

*More Like Jesus* walks a whole church through Mark's Gospel one scene at a time: preached on Sunday, opened in groups midweek, and read by everyone in between. This is one week of Book One, built out completely, so you can feel how it works before you decide anything.

### SUNDAY

You preach the scene—entered from the inside, hinged on a single turn the room discovers for itself.

### MIDWEEK

Groups open the same scene in a write-in workbook, with questions that start a conversation instead of ending one.

### EVERY DAY

A devotional edition invites everyone to read short daily entries on the same verses. Nothing to prepare, nothing to catch up on.

## Why this is free

Our passion is to help you tell the story of Jesus. Picture your whole congregation reading one short entry each morning, and every group opening the same workbook that week. There is nothing quite like an entire community of Jesus followers, all walking the same road, together.

## A taste, not the starting line.

*The scene that follows is Scene Five of Book One,* The Way to Begin Again.
*When you run the series, you'll start at Scene One.*

SUNDAY — HOW TO PREACH IT

# The scene, hinged on a turn.

This series teaches experience-first: story before explanation. That isn't one technique among many—it's how Jesus taught, according to Mark: telling the crowd a story and saving the explanation for the ones who stayed (Mark 4:33–34). It preaches well because it works the way people actually receive a story: they settle into a flattering seat, and then, at the turn, find themselves reseated as the one who needs grace.

The climax is the turn—the "you are the man" moment (2 Samuel 12), where the story stops being about its characters and becomes about the hearer. Every scene in the accompanying *The More Like Jesus Guide* has two:

### The Nathan Turn HARD · COMFORTABLE TO CONVICTED

Jesus leaves town with people still sick and still wanting. You may want the healing more than the Healer—and he loves you too much to be only your instrument.

### The Beloved Turn SOFT · AFFLICTED TO AFFIRMED

When he doesn't heal the way you asked, he still doesn't leave. His silence is not his absence, and his no is not the withdrawal of his love.

*Rule of thumb: the Nathan Turn says* repent*; the Beloved Turn says* you're forgiven.
*Choose which message your community needs on any given week. Book One, Scene Five, is a hard scene to preach soft. Locate the grace inside the disappointment, not around it. Whichever you choose, don't announce it and don't explain it up front.*

## The Trellis — This scene, worked through

The trellis is the structure a story climbs. One shape that reliably sets up either turn:

1. **The Wound.** Open with the ache, not the text, which is named in each scene in the books. For this scene it is: *God may exist, but he doesn't really care about me—he cares about his agenda, and I'm a means to it.* Don't cite a verse yet. Let people recognize themselves.

2. **The Handoff.** Hand the ache to Scripture: Mark has just shown a town mobbing Jesus for what he can do. The question underneath the crowd is the question underneath us—are we loved, or just useful?

3. **The Word.** Read Mark 1:29–39 in full, as dramatically as you can. Don't rush it.

4 **The Scene.** Inhabit it, present tense. Dawn in Capernaum. Simon Peter wakes to the sound of people already at the door—the crowd is back. He goes to wake the rabbi, and Jesus is gone. Peter takes off running, and when he finds him in a solitary place he blurts the only thing that makes sense to him: *Everyone is looking for you.* The ministry is working. Peter wonders, *why would you walk away from a town that wants you?*

5 **The Seat.** Let the room sit, comfortably, in Peter's logic. Of course you go back. The need is obvious, the crowd is real, the work is right there. We would all run to tell him. We admire the urgency. We are Peter at the door, sure we know what Jesus should do next.

6 **The Turn.** Then reseat them. Jesus stands—and doesn't head back to town. *Let us go somewhere else.* He will not be used, even for good. Earlier that day Mark says Jesus touched the sick; the kingdom comes through contact, not at arm's length—and that same Jesus refuses to be reduced to a dispenser of what we want. Ask it plainly, then let the silence linger.

7 **The Table.** End on Jesus, not a to-do. He didn't come to use you like a tool; he came to restore you as a beloved child. The invitation isn't *try harder*—it's a chair pulled out. Come for him.

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THE QUESTION AT THE TURN

## Which did we come for this morning —the healing, or the Healer?

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The power is in the recognition, and recognition must be discovered.

**Preacher's note.** *A fully worked single-scene sermon, and the theology and pedagogy behind the method, are in* The Slow Reveal: Forming Disciples Through the Story of Jesus *(Invite, 2027).*

# Give them first-century ears.

What a first-century listener would have caught and your congregation cannot. In the sermon, these images are the middle—after you tell the story straight and before the turn. In the group, they open Half Two. Describe them in your own voice; pick three. ★ marks the strong defaults.

### ★ The house

*The kingdom takes root in homes, not headquarters.*

Jesus does not set up shop in the synagogue or a public hall. He makes Peter's house his base. The pattern repeats throughout the Gospels: he eats in homes, teaches in courtyards, sleeps under roofs. The religious leaders criticize him for exactly this. But he keeps choosing homes over temples, dinner tables over altars. Kingdom living happens where people actually live.

### ★ Touch

*Contamination flows the wrong way.*

Jesus takes Peter's mother-in-law by the hand. Direct contact with sickness made you ritually unclean under the law. Jesus does not care about ceremonial contamination; he touches what others avoid and pulls people out of suffering through contact, not command. In his world the doctor does not get sick from his patients. The patients get well from the doctor.

### ★ Solitary place

*The pattern that makes everything else possible.*

*Very early, while it was still dark, he went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.* This is not a productivity strategy. It is the shape of the relationship the rest of the day flows from. When the disciples find him and report that everyone is looking, his response is to leave. The crowd had begun to organize around using him.

### Sunset

*The moment the legal barrier drops.*

Mark notes the timing: *that evening, after sunset.* Carrying the sick would violate Sabbath law, so the town waits, desperate people watching the sky for the first stars. The moment the sun sets, they surge. The detail reveals a system that made sick people wait for healing.

### The door

*Threshold of mercy.*

Doors were thresholds of both hospitality and exclusion. Here the door becomes a place of hope. The desperate cannot cross it uninvited, but they can wait at it, laying their worst at the threshold. Jesus does not stay inside where it is controlled. He comes to the door and meets them there.

*From the scene-by-scene notes in* The More Like Jesus Guide, Act One.

MIDWEEK — THE GROUP SESSION

# Open the same scene together.

The session runs about an hour in two halves that mirror Jesus' own pattern in Mark 4:33–34: he told the story to the crowd, then opened it with the ones who stayed. Experience the story, then understand it. It never assumes anyone did the reading—the encounter happens in the room.

## HALF ONE · EXPERIENCE THE STORY

**Read it cold.** Read Mark 1:29–39 aloud, slowly, before any setup.

**First response.** One word or phrase from each person—no explaining yet.

**First-century imagery.** Capernaum, a courtyard home full of extended family; the synagogue as a town square, not a sanctuary; and a Jesus who touches a fever when the law said touching made you unclean. The kingdom comes through contact, not distance.

## HALF TWO · UNDERSTAND THE STORY

**Name the wound.** "Does God only care about his own agenda?" The real issue underneath: *I feel like I'm being used.*

**Open it up.** The whole town wants Jesus for what he can do. At dawn he's gone, praying—and when Peter finds him, he walks on. Why does Jesus leave obvious need unmet?

**Land the one thing.** God does not want an employee. God wants you.

**Send them home.** "Where are you relating to God as a transaction—and what would change if you came for him, not for what he gets done?"

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|---|---|
| THE LIE | God may exist, but he doesn't care about me. |
| THE WOUND | "Does God only care about his own agenda?" |
| THE REAL ISSUE | I feel like I'm being used. |
| THE INVITATION | God doesn't want an employee; God wants a relationship. |

MIDWEEK — YOUR STORY

## Questions for each group member.

*This section is contained in the workbook edition. Group members write responses directly in the book.*

1 Name the way you currently relate to God most naturally—as a transaction, an insurance policy, a job, a show? Or what? Be specific about the pattern, not just the label.

2 Think of someone whose relationship with God has seemed genuinely restful rather than driven, someone who appears to abide rather than produce. What makes their faith look different from yours?

3 When did you last stop not to strategize or pray for outcomes, but simply to be present with God? Name the date. If you can't remember one, say that.

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MIDWEEK — LIVE THE STORY

## What the scene leaves you with.

*This section is contained in the workbook edition. Group members read this at the end of their week with the scene, before the next gathering.*

THE HEART OF THE SCENE

### God does not want an employee. God wants you.

The quietest scene does the deepest work. Jesus has a day of undeniable, useful ministry, and the next morning he is gone, alone, praying, and when the demand comes hunting for him, he moves away from it rather than toward it. He will not be made a resource, not even a good one, and not even by the people who love him. You cannot relate to a person the way you operate a tool and call it intimacy.

## The question each entry asks

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|---|---|
| Touch | Name how you actually relate to God. The pattern, not the label. |
| Waiting | The wait may be for presence, not an outcome you are failing to earn. |
| Retreating | He left the demand unmet on purpose. Rest can be faithfulness. |
| Seeking | Seek him, not only outcomes. The disciples hunted him to put him back to work. |
| Trusting | He is a Person who wants you, not a tool you operate. |
| Yes | Yes is relationship, not recruitment. That changes what you feared it would cost. |

## The Turn

The lie under this scene is that God only wants to use you—that you are a resource for his agenda, not a person he loves. The truth is that Jesus refuses to be managed, walks away from the crowd that wanted to put him to work, and offers not a transaction but himself—a Person who wants you.

*Name the turn in your own words:* This week I am turning from _____ toward _____.

## This week's posture

**Name the pattern.** Write the way you most naturally relate to God. Transaction, job, show, or what. Be specific.

**Stop without asking.** Once this week, stop to be with God and ask for nothing. Notice how hard or strange that is.

**Leave one demand.** Find one demand you could leave unmet on purpose, the way Jesus left the town. Leave it. Watch what happens.

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*Simon and the others hunted for Jesus and found him praying in a solitary place. His first response was not to go back and help more people. It was to keep moving. There is something in that. God does not want an employee. He wants a relationship.*

## You are allowed to rest.

**If you want to go deeper:** Skye Jethani, *With* (Thomas Nelson, 2011) · Ruth Haley Barton, *Invitation to Solitude and Silence* (IVP, 2004) · Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (HarperOne, 1981).

EVERY DAY — THE DAILY READING

# What everyone reads through the week.

*Between Sunday and midweek, every reader walks the scene a few verses at a time—Scripture, an unhurried retelling, a piece of Len's own life, and a short prayer. Five short readings carry Scene Five. Here is one of them in full, exactly as it is contained in the book.*

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## Retreating

*"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."*

MARK 1:35

It is very early, the morning after the Sabbath.

Yesterday was Jesus' first public ministry day. And what a day it was: teaching that captured the town and drew out a naysayer; casting out a demon; healing Simon's mother-in-law; receiving a bunch of people for healing. By evening, the entire town crowded Simon's door, desperate and hopeful. The day was overwhelming. Extraordinary.

So, what does Jesus do the next morning for an encore?

He disappears.

What? This seems so counterintuitive. Shouldn't Jesus wake up and rustle up the team, ready to take new ground? Capitalizing on momentum, making strategic moves? There is work to be done!

As we progress through Mark's gospel, notice how often Jesus goes off "to a solitary place and prayed." His pattern, beginning in this moment, is to leave the group pre-dawn, while they sleep, and find someplace to speak with and listen to God. (I wonder if Jesus was a good sleeper.)

Jesus made it a practice to retreat before he could advance. We began this study by asking questions about hustle, and the need to "always be closing."

An instrumental view of the world and of others convinces us that we can never pause. It says we must always control, produce, and keep moving, because it's the only way to keep bread on the table.

But Jesus models something radically different. He shows us retreat that is not optional, but essential, and not as mere rest, but as relational reconnection. When Jesus withdraws to solitary places, he is actively rejecting suspicion and reaffirming his understanding of the Father's care.

My father was an officer and strategist in the U.S. Army. Growing up, he taught me about the importance of strong supply lines. A supply line is the lifeline that an army establishes to keep the flow of food and equipment to the soldiers on the front lines. Without secure supply lines, front-line troops become isolated and vulnerable.

He taught me a critical insight: mass beats speed. Speed alone stretches you thin. Without retreat and replenishment, advancement eventually collapses. Consider the Nazis' Blitzkrieg tactic of 1939. Their rapid advances seemed unstoppable at first, but eventually, their overextended supply lines collapsed. Pumped full of methamphetamine-laced chocolate, their soldiers could move fast but eventually, exhausted, they collapsed, and their gains were lost.

Modern society is addicted to speed. Spiritually, we live the same story: moving fast, fueled by suspicion that if we slow down, we will fail. Even in the church, it seems that deep down, we suspect God doesn't care enough to sustain us. We become our own frantic, isolated army.

Jesus never fell for this trap. He retreated regularly to rest fully in his Father's care. He didn't need to manipulate circumstances. He didn't need to be suspicious of outcomes. In God's presence, Jesus found replenishment, relational security, and perspective.

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*In the language of God, to retreat is to reinforce supply and regain strength.*

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In military parlance, retreat means losing ground, but in the language of God, to retreat is to reinforce supply and regain strength. Retreat prevents the erosion of trust by suspicion. Retreat reminds us God cares about us relationally, not just about our productivity.

The presence of God is an important theme, and one we will come back to a lot. The biblical concept of *telos* is both our destination and our daily invitation. The meaning of life is not endless advancement or productivity. It is abiding intimately with God.

When you consistently retreat into God's presence, suspicion fades, and trust deepens. Your life stops feeling fragile or suspiciously manipulated and starts feeling secure, stable, and relationally rich.

Jesus' favorite retreat practice was to pray. But retreat can take many forms. You may prefer prayer or Bible study. You may like to journal or read others' words. There is no right or wrong method; the goal is to commune—to be in God's presence.

Why is it good to retreat and pray? When we spend time in God's presence, our spirit calms and our rest in God deepens. Jesus carried a load unlike any other. Yet he found time for a rhythm of retreat.

We are well advised to pay attention to this moment in the story: retreat before advance. And, retreat after advance. The two practices go hand in hand, and one fuels the other. It is the best weapon against suspicion and the strongest foundation for trust.

**PRAY** *Lord, teach me to retreat. Strip away my suspicion and fear that slowing down means losing control. Draw me daily into your presence. Help me rest deeply in your relational care and find rest in you alone. Amen.*

## The rest of the week

*The other four readings that carry Scene Five:*

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|---|---|
| Touch | Jesus takes the fevered woman's hand, touching what the law called unclean. The kingdom comes through contact, not distance. |
| Waiting | At sundown the whole town crowds the door. What we bring Jesus, and what we expect back, says who we think he is. |
| Seeking | "Everyone is looking for you!" Peter means it as good news. But being wanted and being loved are not the same. |
| Trusting | Jesus stands, and doesn't head back to town. "Let us go somewhere else." He came to give himself, not his services. |

*Five readings a week, six scenes a book. This is one morning of it.*

WHEN YOU'RE READY

# Bring it to your whole church.

That was one week. The series walks all of Mark the same way—twelve books in three acts, each a six-to-seven-week study that stands on its own. The answer to "what do we preach next?" and "what does my group study next?" at the same time.

FOR EVERY READER

**Trade devotional**—the story, entered scene by scene, for daily reading.

FOR EVERY GROUP MEMBER

**Workbook edition**—turn-key and write-in, the same scenes with room to respond.

FOR EVERY LEADER

**The More Like Jesus Guide**—one per act. Equips you to host transformation, not manufacture it.

**Every member gets their own copy.** The leader materials are a single set. The devotionals and workbooks are what the whole church carries. Bulk pricing applies automatically in the cart, so the more of your people walk it together, the less each copy costs.

## Start the walk

Book One, *The Way to Begin Again* (Mark 1:1–2:5), is available now. The Act One Guide arrives November 2026, and Book Two, *The Way to Trust*, follows in January. Also from the series: *The Slow Reveal*, the full method behind the turn you just preached.

inviteministries.org/more-like-jesus

*Not by trying harder, but by staying close.*

MLJ