

MARK

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Scripture quotations taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (Anglicised Edition). Copyright © 1973, 1979, 1984 by Biblica (formerly International Bible Society). Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers. All rights reserved. 'NIV' is a registered trademark of Biblica. UK trademark number 1448790.

Copyright © 2012 Jeremy McQuoid (reprinted once)

First published in Great Britain in 2012

The right of Jeremy McQuoid to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Italics in Bible verses are author's own.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-906173-55-5

Designed by Diane Bainbridge

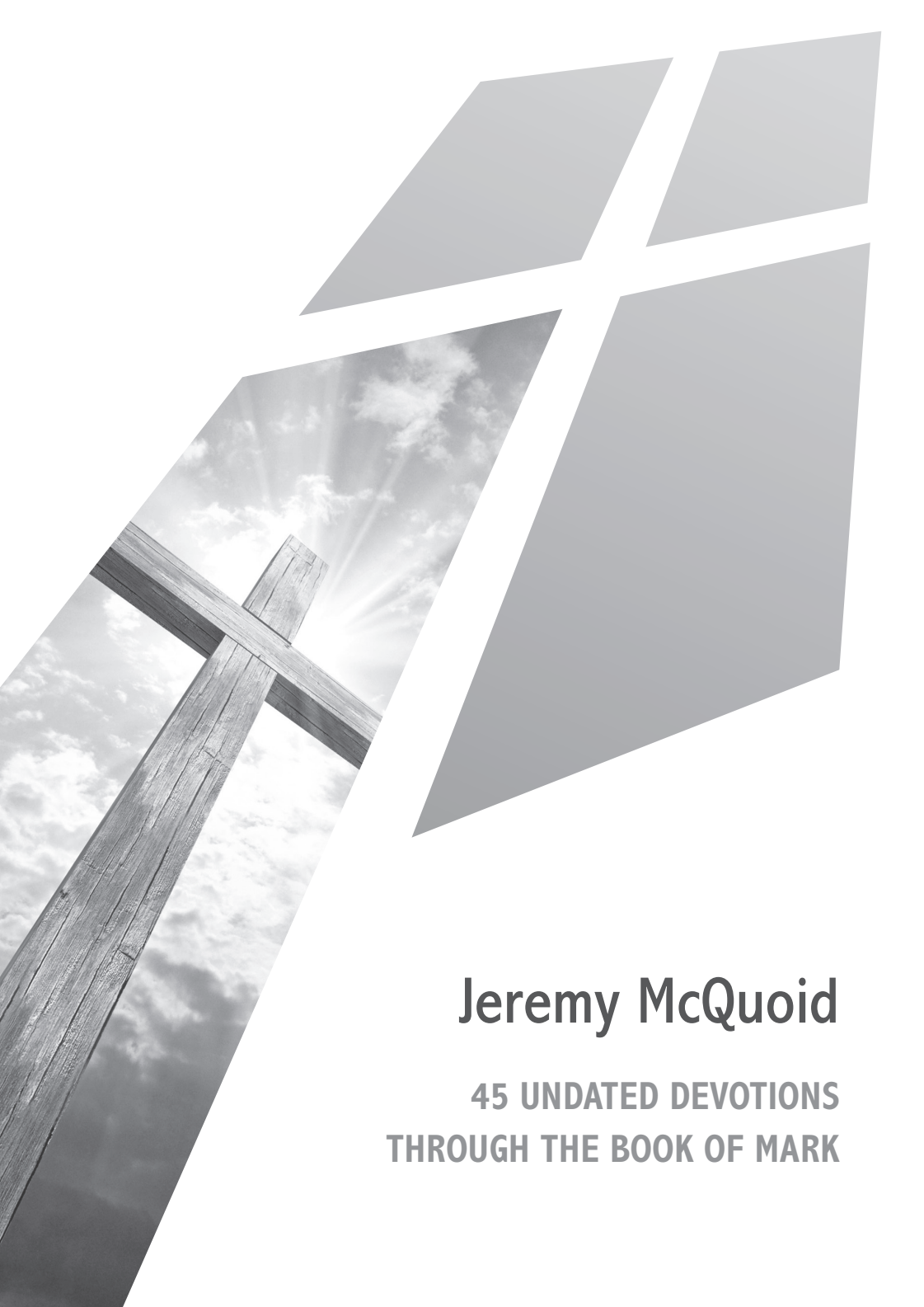
Printed in the UK by www.printbridge.co.uk

10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com

9D Centurion Court, Farington, Leyland, PR25 3UQ, England

Email: info@10ofthose.com

Website: www.10ofthose.com



Jeremy McQuoid

**45 UNDATED DEVOTIONS
THROUGH THE BOOK OF MARK**

INTRODUCTION

Until the early 1900s, not many people bothered with Mark's Gospel. Why would you? It seemed the poor relation of the much longer Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which contained most of Mark's stories, and so much more besides. But interest in Mark suddenly sparked into life when scholars began to realize that Mark was the first Gospel written. It was the original Gospel.

Matthew and Luke based their longer Gospels on Mark, and quoted from it, at times almost word for word. That is how revered Mark's Gospel was. Mark is also special precisely because it is shorter than the others. It was written to a group of suffering Christians, probably in Rome, who were facing execution, and had no time for theological intricacies. They needed to know the most essential parts of the Gospel, without getting lost in theological jargon.

Who is Jesus, and why is He worth dying for? Mark even does away with any reference to Jesus' birth, so he can focus on the most essential stories that convey the meaning and power of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. He presents Jesus as a gripping hero figure who heals, confronts, exorcizes and resurrects, all at breakneck speed (Mark's favourite linking word between stories is 'immediately').

One third of the Gospel is devoted to the week of Jesus' death. Mark's message is clear – the all-conquering Son of God is also God's 'suffering servant', and the true meaning of His life revolves around a cross, three hours of darkness and an empty tomb.

The other intriguing attraction of Mark's Gospel is that many of the eyewitness accounts probably come from Peter, who got closer to Jesus than anyone. There are clear pointers to eyewitness testimony – the greenness of the grass at the feeding of the 5,000, the vividness of the transfiguration, the fact that the actual words of Jesus in Aramaic are preserved at key points in the text. We know that Mark was with Peter towards the end of Peter's life, and no one else would have dared write about Peter's abject failure at Jesus' trial, apart from the great apostle himself. So much of this Gospel carries Peter's stamp – it is about failing disciples who can barely grasp who Jesus is, and who stumble as they try to follow Him. It's a gospel for ordinary men and women.

So here is the original gospel of Jesus, written from the vivid perspective of His closest friend. The unadorned, 'no frills', pure Gospel of Jesus, raw and ready to change your life.

Jeremy McQuoid

Mark has a very ‘cut-to-the-chase’ style. While Matthew and Luke begin their Gospels with stories of Jesus’ birth and elaborate family trees, Mark has no time for such intricacies. He tells us right away what his message is about ‘The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.’

The sprinter Linford Christie spoke about starting a race on the ‘b’ of ‘bang’. That is the urgency that sparks from Mark’s quill. He is desperate to tell people the message of Jesus. And in this opening verse he uses three phrases that are key to that message:

1. Gospel – the word means ‘good news’. It is often linked with the verb ‘preach’ in the New Testament. It pictures a town crier announcing the edict of the king. This gospel is God’s authoritative announcement to the world. It can only be ‘good news’ however, if people are clear about the bad news that precedes it. God is angry at our sin (Rom. 1:18–20), but has chosen, out of sheer love, to give us Jesus as a ‘propitiation’ or ‘anger-bearing sacrifice’ (see Rom. 3:25).

2. Christ – Jesus did not come into our world in a vacuum. He was the fulfilment of centuries of prophecy that the ‘Christ’ (in Hebrew ‘the Messiah’), would come to save God’s people from their sin. The word ‘messiah’ means ‘anointed one’ and refers to the anointing of kings in Israel who were set apart for the task of

kingship by God. Jesus is God’s anointed king, set apart for His kingly task – dying on a cross to bring salvation to a lost world.

3. Son of God – Mark is actually more interested in the title ‘Son of God’ than he is in the title ‘Christ’ (Matthew’s favourite theme). In the first half of the gospel, Mark presents Jesus as the supernatural healer who casts out demons, heals the sick, calms storms, and opposes the Pharisees all at breakneck speed, to prove that He is the Son of God – full of power and authority.

Notice Mark does not introduce the gospel as a set of propositions we need to believe, but as a person we need to believe on (John 3:16) – ‘Jesus Christ, the Son of God’, whom we need to love, honour and obey. Ultimately, the gospel is very personal. It is not just a message to the world; it is a personal relationship with a loving, powerful Saviour. Paul summed it up by calling Jesus ‘the Son of God, *who loved me and gave himself for me*’ (Gal. 2:20).

REFLECTION

*Do you love Jesus?
Are you convinced of
Jesus’ love for you? How
desperate are you to tell
others about Him?*

Why did John the Baptist conduct his entire ministry in the desert? Surely that wasn't the best place for God to send him. Why didn't he set up a podium in Jerusalem Main Street on a Saturday afternoon, or better still the Temple with all the crowds milling around? Why do we have this strange scenario where, 'The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem *went out to him*' (v. 5), in a 110-degree desert?

Could it be that God wanted to encourage the people away from the hustle and bustle of their daily city lives, to the austere quiet of the desert, so they could really listen to Him? Emails and demanding jobs and screaming children and 24-hour cities make quiet spaces hard to find. But you need quiet to hear from God, as Elijah learned from the 'still small voice' (1 Kgs. 19:12, KJV). God wanted to prepare Israel for the good news of Christ's coming, but in a context where they were ready to listen to Him.

And perhaps the barrenness and austerity of a desert matched John's austere message. He was not calling people to a razzmatazz revival, but to a 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (v. 4). If people were going to be truly ready for Jesus, they

needed to strip their own lives bare of pride, apathy and greed, like a desert is stripped bare of any form of earth's comforts.

That's what baptism pictures. We 'died with Christ' through baptism (see Rom. 6:3). Baptism represents the death of my 'old' self, so that my 'new self' in Christ – His love, His sacrificial spirit, His absolute obedience to His Father – can take its place. New life can only take root when the old life is dead and buried. As believers we need to confess our sins each morning to God and ask Him to strip away all that hinders His Spirit working through us to produce Christ-likeness.

Crucifying the flesh calls for discipline, stripping away the excesses in our life, and a barren desert is a great visual reminder of that process. That is how we 'Prepare the way for the Lord' (v. 3) in our own hearts.

REFLECTION

Where can you find quiet so that you can hear God's voice? What needs to be stripped away from your life to make it ready for Jesus?

Simon and Garfunkel used to sing about ‘The Sound of Silence’. And before we race on with Jesus’ public ministry, it is worth meditating on ‘Jesus – the silent years’. Mark says absolutely nothing about the first thirty years of Jesus’ life. He simply begins ‘At that time [when he’s about 30 years old] Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee’ (v. 9).

The longer gospels don’t add much either. Matthew says a little about His birth, and Luke adds a wonderful story about Jesus the 12 year old confounding the Bible scholars in the Temple with His great learning. But other than that, the gospels are deafeningly silent about Jesus’ early years.

The snippet Mark gives us, ‘Nazareth in Galilee’, suggests Jesus was brought up in modest seclusion. Nazareth was a tiny town which archaeologists have struggled to find (population 120 in Jesus’ day), and so despised by Jews that Nathaniel asked, ‘Can anything good come from there?’ (John 1:46). Jewish sophisticates lived in the south, near Jerusalem where the pulse of Israel’s national life was measured. But Nazareth? It was obscure even by backward Galilee standards!

Jesus lived for thirty years in a quiet, dusty town, where nothing much ever happened, under the authority of His working-class parents. Luke’s ‘Jesus in the Temple’ story ends with Jesus going home and being ‘subject’ (Luke 2:51, *kjv*) to His parents again, and He probably attended His father’s funeral

in His teenage years. Joseph is not in the picture by the time Jesus goes public.

But sometimes silence is striking. Jesus, in His first thirty years, represents us in the mundane things of life. He obeyed His parents, was brought up in a dull little town. Nothing is known about Him, not even if He was longing for adventure, like Luke Skywalker as a farm boy longing to be involved in intergalactic *Star Wars*.

None of us can escape the mundane in life. Hanging out the clothes, taxi-ing the children, filling out endless paperwork, stacking the chairs on a Sunday. We spend more time sleeping than we do in church. ‘Jesus – the silent years’ reminds us that He lived through all our dreary Mondays, all our ‘what’s-life-all-about’ sighs, and He did it in obedience to His Father. In ‘Jesus – the silent years’, we hear the echoes of Paul – ‘whatever you do [even if what you do isn’t very thrilling], do it all for the glory of God’ (1 Cor. 10:31).

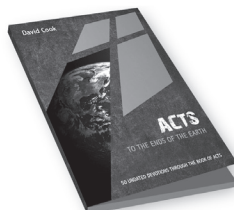
REFLECTION

How can you glorify God in the mundane responsibilities of life? Think about work, church service, everyday activities such as shopping, cooking, walking the dog, visiting friends, taking care of children, elderly parents and so on.

MORE IN THIS SERIES



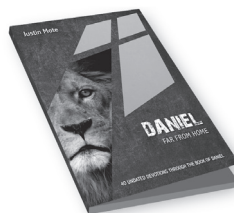
ROMANS
Momentous News
By David Cook
ISBN: 978-1-906173-24-1



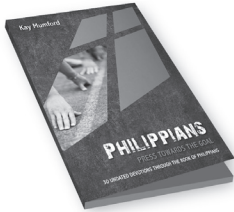
ACTS
To the Ends of the Earth
By David Cook
ISBN: 978-1-909611-02-3



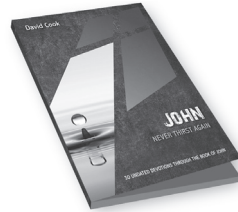
1 THESSALONIANS
Living for Jesus
By Julia Marsden
ISBN: 978-1-906173-67-8



DANIEL
Far From Home
By Justin Mote
ISBN: 978-1-906173-68-5



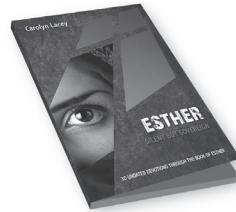
PHILIPPIANS
Press towards the Goal
By Kay Mumford
ISBN: 978-1-909611-31-3



JOHN
Never Thirst Again
By David Cook
ISBN: 978-1-909611-30-6



EZEKIEL
For His Glory
By Peter Lau
ISBN: 978-1-909611-83-2



ESTHER
Silent but Sovereign
By Carolyn Lacey
ISBN: 978-1-909611-84-9

To place an order call: **0844 879 3243** email: sales@10ofthose.com
or order online: www.10ofthose.com



10Publishing is the publishing house of **10ofThose**.

It is committed to producing quality Christian resources that are biblical and accessible.

www.10ofthose.com is our online retail arm selling thousands of quality books at discounted prices.

For information contact: **sales@10ofthose.com**
or check out our website: **www.10ofthose.com**