

## A few quotes to think about:

***“Well done is better than well said”***

*(Benjamin Franklin, a Founding Father of the USA, 1706-90)*

***“Action speaks louder than words, but not nearly so often”***

*(Mark Twain, American author & humourist, 1835-1910)*

***“Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, your values become your destiny”***

*(Mahatma Gandhi, 1869-1948)*

***“Talk doesn’t cook rice”***

*(Chinese Proverb)*

***“I never worry about action, only inaction”***

*(Winston Churchill, 1874-1965)*

***“The world is changed by your example, not by your opinion”***

*(Paulo Coelho, Brazilian writer, 1947- )*

***“Don’t find fault. Find a remedy”***

*(Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company, 1863-1947)*

## Prayer:

Lord, you have taught us that all we do without love is worth nothing. Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you. Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

## Thoughts about NLT:

God’s work often involves hard graft. Eileen Lodge was a do-er; but her motivation was compassion, after seeing the hopeless situation of many people affected by leprosy. Sometimes God heals people miraculously, but often he uses medicine. Isn’t medical intervention a way of helping the body to heal itself? Do you think real love brings healing too? Most people who come for help heard about NLT’s work through word of mouth.

## Mark’s Gospel – Study Notes for Small Groups

### Week 2 – Being a ‘do-er’

In Mark’s gospel Jesus is pictured as always ‘on the go’, doing things. He drives out evil spirits and heals many people as soon as his ministry begins. This is appropriate for Mark’s target audience; Romans were more practical than philosophical.

### What Mark’s gospel leaves out

Since Mark’s emphasis is on what Jesus **does** (rather than what he **says**), his gospel is striking for what it *does not* include: (a) there are no stories about **Jesus’ birth or early years**; so, we don’t usually find Mark’s gospel being read at Christmas-time! Instead, the gospel begins with John the Baptist — and Jesus Christ bursting on to the scene as an adult (chapter 1).

(b) although Mark includes some of Jesus’ **teaching**, there is a lot that is not mentioned. (About 200 verses of Jesus’ teaching, shared by Matthew and Luke, don’t appear in Mark).

(c) many of Jesus’ **best known parables** are not found in Mark’s gospel— for example, the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son are only in Luke’s gospel (a key feature of Luke being parables).

(d) The **‘Lord’s Prayer’** is not in Mark’s gospel.

### To discuss:

**(a)** It’s been said (tongue in cheek) that “When all is said and done, there’s a lot more said than done!” Do we need to do more and say less?

**(b)** What do we tend to leave out in today’s relentless activity? Time to reflect and rest? Personal communication (as opposed to texting, emails, etc.)? Valuing people more than things? A sense of community? How can we redress the imbalance?

### The Active Jesus

A key feature of Mark’s gospel are the **miracles** of Jesus. If we think about this, the miracles have certain characteristics:

(1) they express **action** rather than words or feelings (as we have been discussing) – Jesus **does something** for people in various kinds of need.

(2) it takes **supernatural** activity to bring them about – so Jesus is more than a good, active human being. His miracles express the power of God to change situations.

(3) Jesus performed them out of **compassion**, as well as to demonstrate who He is.

### For Discussion:

Looking at four ‘miracle’ passages, let’s consider what they might be saying to us:

(a) **Mark 1:29-34** ... the first healings in the gospel:

Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is **unwell** but probably not seriously ill (in bed with a fever) and Jesus heals her. Do we pray for healing when illness is not serious (colds, flu, headache, etc.)?

Jesus’ reputation for healing soon travels and **large crowds** appear, with Jesus healing many of them. Do we see this kind of thing happening today or was it unique to the time of Jesus?

**Demons/evil spirits** are also driven out of people (as we can see in the preceding passage - **1:23-28**). This is quite a feature of Mark’s gospel. What do we make of this?

(b) **Mark 1:40-45** ... the man with ‘leprosy’:

‘Leprosy’ (a term in the Bible which includes various skin diseases) is socially isolating; nobody would have gone near this man for fear of becoming contaminated. Jesus did something very unexpected: he **touch**ed him. Why? How powerful do we find the sense of ‘touch’?

Perhaps one reason for Jesus wanting this man not to tell everyone (which he did!) was not to present himself as a **celebrity ‘miracle-worker’** (see verse 45 for the problems that fame brings). Should the church’s healing ministry be exercised somewhat quietly?

Why did Jesus ask the man to go to the priests?

Is there someone **we need to pray for** in terms of healing right now?  
[Do pause to pray if you would like to.]

(c) **Mark 8:1-10** ... the feeding of the four thousand:

In **verse 2**, we’re told that the reason for this miracle is that Jesus had **compassion** on the people. Should this always be the motivation behind what we do? Thinking of the world today, who do we – or should we – have compassion on?

Do we sometimes feel **helpless** in the face of need? Can prayer make a difference? What **can we do**?

(d) **Mark 10:46-52** ... blind Bartimaeus:

Bartimaeus calls out to Jesus, but many people tell him (probably not politely) to “shut up”! Who do we conveniently ignore, or wish would ‘shut up’ or ‘go away’ today?

In **verse 51**, Jesus asks him, “What do you want me to do for you?” We might think this is an unnecessary question, as his need is obvious; but maybe not. **What do I want Jesus to do for me?** If I don’t know what to ask for, how can God answer?

### Two other Bible Passages:

Two other passages are worth considering. These are not part of Mark’s gospel, but relate to what we’re thinking about:

(a) **Luke 10:38-42** ... the story of Mary and Martha: Are some people naturally ‘doers’ while others are ‘contemplative’? Does **personality** come into this? Should we all aspire to be a bit of both?

(b) **James 2:14-26** ... the contention of James (in his very early epistle in the early years of the Church) is that **‘doing’** is essential to faith. He even says, “Faith without works is dead”.

The Reformer Martin Luther disagreed vehemently with this, and so he called James “an epistle of straw”, because he had discovered that we are justified by faith and not by works (as the apostle Paul is keen to convey). Is there a contradiction? Do we see faith primarily as **inactive** or about **doing**? Or is it both? Does one lead to the other?