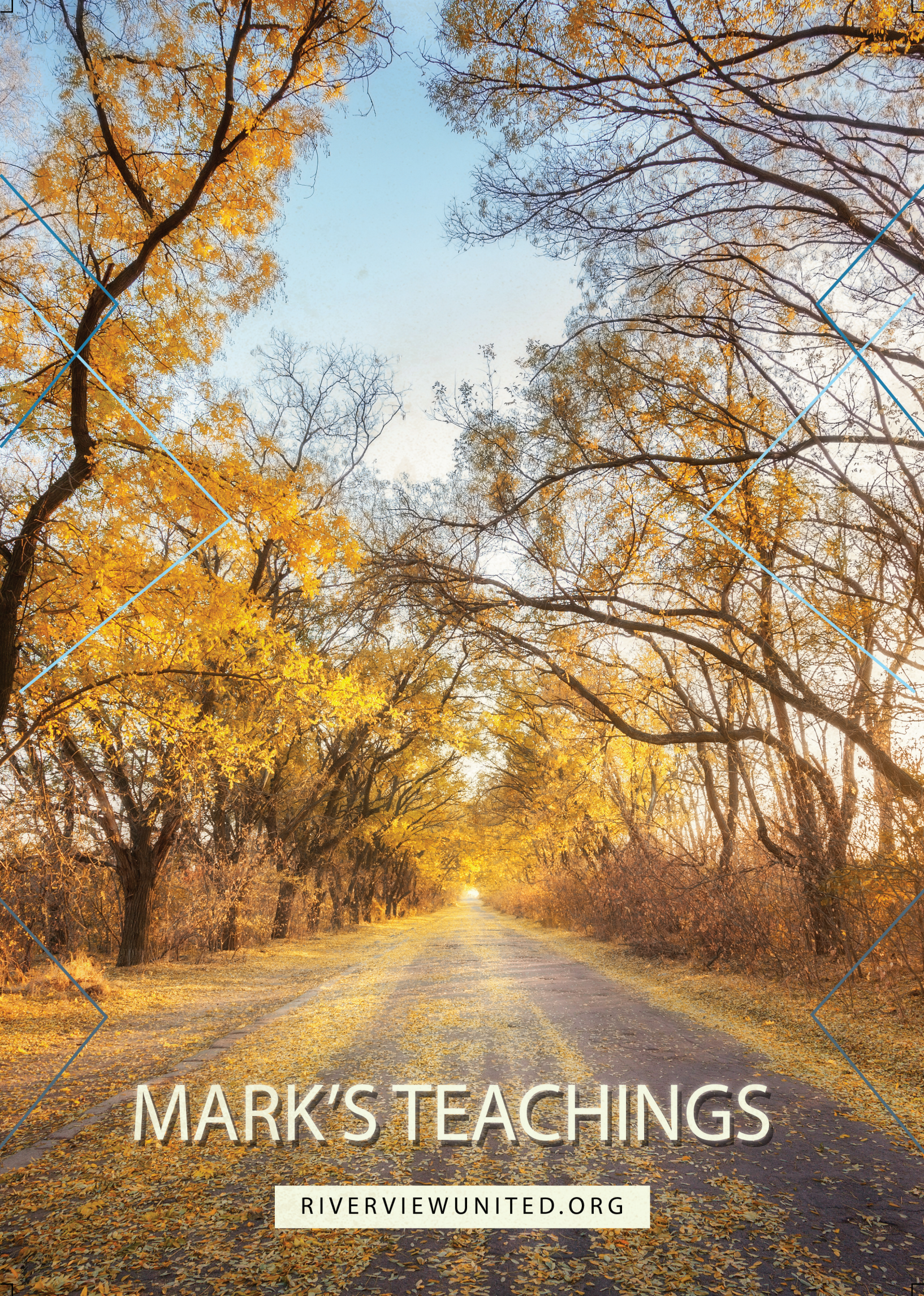




MARK'S TEACHINGS

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“Is Jesus the Only Way?”

Easter provides us the assurance that Jesus’ death was enough to satisfy the righteous requirements of God’s Law through Christ’s resurrection. **2 Corinthians 5:21** says, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Jesus himself confirmed this fact from the cross when he said, “It is finished” (**John 19:30**). Paul confirms this fact in **Romans 4:25**, “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” To justify is to “show or prove to be right.” We can “become the righteousness of God” through faith in Jesus Christ!

There is no question that God loves all of us and that His Son died for the sins of the whole world: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (**John 3:16**). But we can’t read **John 3:16** without reading the rest of the chapter.

Jesus begins Chapter 3 in responding to Nicodemus by telling him, “I tell you the truth, no one can *see* the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (**John 3:3**; italics mine). Jesus goes on to say, “I tell you the truth, no one can *enter* the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (**John 3:5**; italics mine). What does Jesus mean by being born again by the Spirit in order to “see” and “enter” the kingdom of God? Jesus gives us the answer in **John 3:15**, “that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” He goes on to say that we must believe in Him in this life: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (**John 3:18**). By inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul edifies for us how to be “born of the Spirit” in **Ephesians 1:13b-14**, “Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory.” He goes on to say in **Ephesians 2:8-9**, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”

We are saved through faith in Christ now – not after we die, and Jesus drives this eternally significant fact home in **John 8:19, 21** and **24**, when speaking with the Jewish leaders:

“You do not know me or my Father, Jesus replied. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”

“Once more Jesus said to them, I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.”

“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”

Jesus tells those who do not believe in him that they will “die in their sins”, and “where he goes, they cannot come.” Believing in Christ after we die requires no faith at all, because the bible defines faith as “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (**Hebrews 11:1**). **Hebrews 11:6** says, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Jesus said the only way we can seek God is through the Son: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (**John 14:6**). We can’t come to the Father except through the Son, and we have to make the decision to trust God through Jesus Christ by faith now: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever *lives and believes* in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (**John 11:25**; italics mine)

God does not want “anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance” (**2 Peter 3:9**). To repent (“metanoia” in the Greek) means to “change one’s mind.” That’s why he sent John the Baptist to prepare the way (repentance for sinners) for us to receive the promised Messiah...we have to change the way we think about God to bring our thoughts and ways in line with his. He warned us this was a problem in **Isaiah 55:8-9**: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

So what about those who claim to believe in God or Allah? What about those who have never heard the gospel (and the Jews and the Muslims have)? God tells us in **Romans 1:18-21**: “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

God says that all we have to do is look outside and know that he exists – his eternal power and divine nature can be seen from what has been made. Therefore, why is it we tend to ask others what we should do instead of asking the One who created everything? **Acts 2:21**, which quotes **Joel 2:32**, says, “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” His Word tells us everything we need to know about our salvation and what is required, but very few Christians have even a basic knowledge of the bible, which is why I became a pastor. You see the question is not whether God exists, or is the bible true, or is Jesus the only way to salvation. The question is: do we want to know?

Several years ago I was asked to lead a bible study for the youth at my church at a retreat. I was so excited because the passage they wanted me to teach was from **1 John 1:12-13**, which says, “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” Wow! I got the privilege of sharing with 30-35 teenagers how to know they have eternal life. I read the scripture and was ready to launch into the lesson when the one of the youth, whose father is Jewish, asked me the following question: “Do you believe my father is going to hell because he does not believe that Jesus is the Messiah?” I stumbled for what seemed like minutes, but the Holy Spirit, in my mind’s eye, kept saying, “Tell her!” I remember having this conversation in my head and asking, “Tell her what?” And then I remembered the radio program I just happened to have listened to on the way to the retreat. Ravi Zacharias, a former Hindu, was teaching on the story of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, who had been praying to the God of the Jews and God sent an angel to him to tell him his prayers had been answered (**Acts 10**). God also sent an angel to Peter to have him go tell Cornelius and his family about Jesus. And then it hit me...I asked this young woman if she believed in God, and she said, “Yes.” I then asked her if she loved God with “all of her heart and all of her soul and all of her strength” (**Deuteronomy 6:5**), and she said, “Yes.” Then the Spirit of God told me to say this to her: “Then ask God if Jesus is the only way – but don’t ask him if you don’t want to know.”

You could have heard a pin drop...the lesson was clearly over. She went outside and all of the youth followed her, and I sat there in awe of what had just happened. The good news is that every teenager in that room heard the truth of God’s word expressed in a real way, and had a startling opportunity to ask God the same question: Is Jesus the only way?

What about you? Have you thought about how you are going to reconcile your sins to God? Have you asked God, or Allah, or the Supreme Being, or the Man Upstairs, what his plan is? Are you hoping that he grades on a curve? Are you hoping that you will have a second chance in heaven to receive Christ? Are you hoping that if you do good deeds that you can somehow merit God’s favor? Do you think there are many pathways to God? If so, how do you know the one you may have chosen is the best? Is God being restrictive in the bible to say that there is only one way – through His Son?

We believe that God gave us one way to have a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ because it is the perfect way, and therefore the best! All doubt is removed and we do not have to worry any longer about what happens to us when we die when we come to God through His Son.

Do you want to know if Jesus is the only way?

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