

# “Margin”

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026 - MICHAEL BOWERS



## Summary - "Making room for what matters most."

It has been a crazy couple of weeks with weather, snow, and ice as we all attempt to rebalance our daily and weekly schedules. School and work closures have had many of us at home where one would think that we could enjoy a moment of rest, however, that is not always the case. Many of us are still having to try to get work done while also ensuring that school gets done as well. This of course in addition to preparing for storms, shoveling snow, and simply trying to figure out what the days and perhaps weeks ahead will look like. All of that said, we are perhaps all a little stretched when it comes to “margin” in our lives in this snowy and stormy season. Years ago we did a series on margin and in this we defined margin as: The space between our load and our limits, the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating. In today's fast paced, high technology culture, we are often so busy that we lack margin for the things that matter. Add an ice storm followed shortly afterward by one of the biggest snow storms our region has ever seen and our margin can begin to feel as though it is lacking even more so. If we don't guard against it, we can easily begin to feel as though our margin is shrinking in our relationship with God and with others as we attempt to handle all of the things that are on our plates. Our margin and our time for rest all but disappears. We must prioritize getting this margin back. Our margin goal this week is to prioritize our relationships and rest as we face our busy schedules, constant progress, crazy winter storms, adjusting to schedule changes with work and school, along with the everyday worries and anxieties of life. We live in a world that is driven so much by progress and speed, and seasons like this (winter storms that shut everything down) can quickly throw a wrench in our plans thus forcing a slow down that we didn't necessarily want or plan for. In this our margin can get stretched even thinner. We want to encourage all of us here at Rich Fork to recognize the season for what it is (a week or two), understand that it will not last forever (snow will melt away), and to allow this slow down to drive each of us to be aware of where our true hope lies (our relationship with Jesus Christ). We encourage you in seasons like this to purpose time to rest in the Lord and to also simply enjoy time with family.

## Scripture - Mark 1

The Gospel of Mark is fast paced and chalked full of amazing stories describing the ministry and works of Jesus. Chapter one quickly gets us into the thick of things and within half of the first chapter of this book we are already presented with the miraculous power of Jesus, as well as the crowds that are yearning for his touch, healing, and attention. It can be easy to get caught up in the adventure and miracles of this part of the story and miss the moments where Jesus (yes, God in human flesh) chooses to prioritize relationships and rest amidst what was no doubt a very busy schedule among an ever pressing population of people that are in need and desperate for healing. In perhaps the busiest moment of chapter one, where Jesus is healing many and the ministry needs are growing quickly, we see him simply step away to solitude to make time for prayer with the Father. After this He does not return to back to the busyness, but rather moves on to the next town. Both of these are moves that we, in our human nature and progress driven culture, would find not beneficial for a growing ministry. We have much to learn from Jesus on what it means to prioritize our relationship with the Lord, prayer, and rest amidst our own busy schedule and the worries/needs of everyday life. This week really dive into this story and choose to follow Jesus into prioritizing prayer and time away to rest from the busyness that life so easily brings.

# Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

## Further Scripture Study

**Psalm 62:5-6; Ecclesiastes 4:6; Matthew 6:27-34, 11:28-30, 14:13-23; Mark 1; Mark 6:31-32 & 6:46; John 14:27; Philippians 4:6-7**

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

### Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

### Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

# Key Thoughts

"Margin is the space between our load and our limits. Margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating." ~ Richard Swenson

The margin on a piece of paper is where we don't write, we don't fill in with print, and we leave gaps to frame what goes on the page.

Margin in our lives should be the places we don't fill in. The moments we don't cram with extra appointments, one more event, rehearsal, one more 30-second check of social media that turns into 30 minutes or 3 hours and steals our time with the Lord, with friends, or to simply stop.

A few ways to tell that you might have a "margin" issue in your life...

1. You're always mentally and physically exhausted. (Sleep is impacted; can't shut brain off.)
2. Small things get under your skin more easily.
3. You can't turn your anxious thoughts off.
4. You don't seem to have joy about anything.
5. Those who love you most tell you to slow down, yet you always justify why you need to do more.
6. You often worry about what others think of your performance. (What you get done and what you don't.)
7. You get easily distracted and try to multi-task more often.
8. The thought of leaving your phone behind for the day causes great anxiety.
9. Your ability to carry on conversations with those closest to you is lacking.
10. Your personal time alone with God is often dry or non-existent.

It's relatively easy to recognize the impacts of the lack of margin, and most of us, if not all of us, need to create more of it. This week we explore a passage of scripture with Jesus at the center and His modeling of the importance and power of margin. (read Mark chapter 1)

The gospel of Mark begins with the ministry of Jesus. He is baptized (vs. 9-11), then he is tempted (vs. 12-13), then we read vs. 14-15: Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

John the Baptist, who had told of the coming of Jesus, is arrested. Jesus then proclaims what we continue to preach today: Jesus declares, "Repent and believe in the gospel." (The gospel: Jesus lived, died, buried, resurrected - paying the price of our sins.) Then Mark records that Jesus begins to call his disciples. By the time we arrive at vs. 21, the ministry of Jesus will go into full gear

# Key Thoughts

If you were Jesus, what better way to begin your ministry on earth?

- 1st sermon preached - Jesus taught with authority, unlike the religious scribes
- Then immediately (vs. 23), an unclean (demon-possessed) man approaches Jesus. The unclean spirit declares the truth, "You are the Holy One of God." Jesus casts out the demon of the man.
- Vs. 27 - they were all amazed by his authority; even the unclean spirits obey!
- Vs. 28 - worth reading again: "And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee."

This is how to start a kingdom-come mentality in the culture and world around Him. Popularity and notoriety. Name spreading. In today's lingo, Jesus was going viral. But it didn't stop at this moment.. Verses 29-31 picks up: "And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon (also known as Peter) and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them."

Incredible sermon - check. Demon-possessed man healed - check. Sick mother healed - check. What a day! Talk about a packed schedule!

Verses 32-34 tell us that there was even more though: "That evening at sundown they brought to Him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And He would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew Him."

Talk about pressure! Standing, waiting, pushing to get in. To get to see Jesus. What a beginning to his ministry on earth! Could there be a better day?

Notice in verse 34 above that the text does not say Jesus healed all or that He cast out all demons but many. Time out: Jesus had the power to heal all but did not. You might be thinking; I bet the next verse is going to show us that He got up the next day and hustled back to town and started healing, preaching, and casting out demons all over again. Nope.

Does this mean Jesus could not perform the tasks of all the people, instead of just the many? Not the case at all, because if He had power over any demons, He had power over them all, and if He had healed any sicknesses, deformities, and physical limitations, He could heal them all, and scripture proves this for us. Does it mean there were just too many to heal? That is not the case either.

# Key Thoughts

Jesus was teaching so many things at this moment:

- Jesus knew where to go for restoration.
- Jesus knew where to go for power and direction.
- Jesus knew WHEN to go to the Father.
- Jesus was modeling something early at the beginning of His ministry that He would model multiple times in His lifetime on earth.

"Jesus understood His mission. He was not driven by the needs of others, though He often stopped to help hurting people. He was not driven by the approval of others, though He cared deeply for the lost and the broken. Ultimately, Jesus was driven by the Spirit. He was driven by His God-given mission. He knew His priorities and did not let the many temptations of a busy life deter Him from His task." ~ Kevin DeYoung, Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem.

Let's read to see how Jesus handles this sudden, quick rise to stardom picking up in verse 35: "And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He departed and went out to a desolate place, and there He prayed."

Jesus knew the power of the kingdom of God was not busyness or completing the to-do list. Jesus sought restoration and fellowship with His father. And the gospel of Mark recorded three distinct moments when this took place in the life of Jesus, and each of them was at a critical moment in his ministry.

Jesus modeled fellowship with God the Father, as well as solitude in prayer. We must learn to replace crowding schedules with peaceful solitude.

Verse 36 -37 states: "And Simon and those who were with him searched for Him, and they found Him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." This statement comes across as a demand from the disciples: What are you doing here? You should be with the crowds, and we are building a following! You don't have time to be alone.

Jesus replies in verse 38-39: And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Jesus came for miracles, yes. Jesus came for healing, yes. Ultimately though, Jesus came to preach the good news - to offer salvation to sinners.

# Key Thoughts

Jesus was teaching His disciples (and us as well) a valuable lesson early on - You can't do it all and you were never designed to do so.

Jesus led from rest. Jesus led from His relationship with His heavenly father. Jesus preached with power. Jesus prioritized his ministry. Jesus modeled margin.

The majority of us have little margin in any facet of life. The majority of us don't even want it or know how to exist in it. But the reality is, if Jesus modeled, we need it. We need it, not so that we can sit back and be lazy. No, that is not what Jesus modeled. We need margin to be prepared for the relationships and the ministry He has called each of us into.

What if we pursued our relationship with Jesus in such a way, made it such a priority that it impacts the places and relationships that God has placed us? This week we want to challenge you to begin shaping opportunities for margin, rest, restoration, and a relationship with Jesus.

## Reflect & Respond

What do you find that you prioritize most? Is it the promises of God (His Word) and your relationship with Him or is it a busy schedule, progress, and the overall worries of life?

We all have many roles (Christ follower, spouse, parent, employee, friend, etc.). What is one thing that you need to say yes to this week to fulfill your priorities within each of the roles that you serve, especially that of "Christ Follower" and your relationship with the Lord?

What is one thing that you need to say no to this week in order to fulfill priorities in the roles that you have, especially that of "Christ Follower" and your relationship with the Lord?

Has there been anything from the last two weeks, during this somewhat forced season of slow down, that has stood out to you regarding your relationship with the Lord, your spouse, your family? How has the Lord used this season to show you the importance of creating margin?