

Church Group Discussion Guide

Mark 1:9–11 — The Baptism of Jesus

MBC Loudoun | Baptism Sunday

Sermon Focus: In Mark 1, Jesus steps into the baptism waters with sinners—not because He has sin to confess, but because He has come to identify with the sinners He came to save. And before Jesus begins His public ministry, the Father speaks delight over Him: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” The sermon connected this to one of the deepest aches in our lives: our longing to know we are accepted, loved, and secure—not because we have proven ourselves, but because of God’s grace in Jesus.

LEADER FRAMING

Before you begin, take a moment to set the tone: Tonight is not about getting through a worksheet. It is about slowing down together before God’s Word and making room for Jesus to meet us. Some of us are followers of Jesus. Some of us are still exploring, questioning, or unsure what we believe. That is okay. You do not have to pretend, perform, or have polished answers here. Our hope is that this will be a safe place to listen, to be honest, to ask real questions, and to consider what God may be showing us through Jesus.

OPENING ICEBREAKER

Start light. Give people permission to laugh.

1. **Growing up, what was something your parents did that embarrassed you — or something your kids have told you is embarrassing now?** Keep it fun and light. No deep sharing required.
2. **Why do you think those moments stick with us?**

Then say: *It’s funny, but underneath those moments is something most of us understand. We all care, more than we want to admit, about how we are seen, whether we fit in, and whether we are accepted.*

OPENING CONNECTION

1. **Where do people often feel pressure to prove themselves?** Examples: work, school, parenting, sports, social media, church, friendships, family expectations.
2. **Why do you think approval matters so much to us?**
3. **What kinds of “voices” tend to shape how people see themselves?** This could be parents, peers, bosses, coaches, culture, past failure, success, social media, or even their own inner critic.

SCRIPTURE READING - Mark 1:9–11

Invite someone to read the passage slowly.

[9] In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

[10] And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open

and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. [11] And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

After the reading, leave **30–45 seconds of silence**.

Then say: *Before we explain anything, let’s simply notice what stands out.*

HEAD - WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PASSAGE?

- 1. What words or images stand out to you from these verses?** Don’t worry about having a “right answer.” Just notice what draws your attention.
- 2. What feels surprising about Jesus being baptized by John?** John’s baptism was connected to repentance. People were coming confessing sin. But Jesus had no sin to confess.
- 3. What does this passage show us about what kind of King Jesus is?** Consider this: Jesus does not stay distant from broken, sinful, needy people. He steps toward them.
- 4. What do we learn about God from the Father’s words over Jesus?** “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”
- 5. Why does it matter that the Father speaks this over Jesus before Jesus performs miracles, preaches sermons, faces temptation, or goes to the cross?**

Leader note: Keep this section simple. The goal is not to unpack every theological detail. The goal is to help people see Jesus clearly: the King who identifies with sinners and the beloved Son who lives from the Father’s delight.

HEART - WHAT SHOULD I FEEL, LONG FOR, OR WRESTLE WITH IN THIS PASSAGE?

Before moving into personal sharing, normalize the struggle: Many of us live under some kind of pressure to prove ourselves. That does not mean everyone experiences it the same way, but most of us know what it feels like to wonder, “Am I enough? Do I belong? Am I accepted?”

- 1. Where do you see people in our community carrying the pressure to prove themselves?** Think about Loudoun County life: achievement, image, parenting, success, academics, comparison, busyness, reputation.
- 2. What happens to a person over time when they feel like love or acceptance has to be earned?**
- 3. The sermon used the image of a “banner” over someone’s life.** What are some banners people commonly live under? Examples: Prove yourself, Don’t fail, Be impressive, Keep everyone happy.
- 4. How does the Father’s voice over Jesus confront those banners?** “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”
- 5. For those who are comfortable sharing: What kind of voice has been loud in your life lately?** It could be a voice of pressure, shame, fear, comparison, exhaustion, or self-protection.
- 6. How might it change a person to believe that, in Jesus, they do not have to earn God’s love but can receive it by grace?**

Leader note: Do not rush to fix people. Let the group practice listening well. Sometimes the most formative thing that happens in group is not the perfect answer, but someone feeling seen and heard in the presence of Jesus.

HANDS - WHAT MIGHT TRUSTING OBEDIENCE LOOK LIKE FROM THIS PASSAGE?

Say something like: Obedience does not always begin with a dramatic life change. Sometimes it begins with receiving what Jesus is showing us, telling the truth about where we are, and taking one honest next step.

- 1. Where might Jesus be inviting you to receive His grace instead of trying to clean yourself up first?**
- 2. If you are a follower of Jesus, how does this passage help you understand baptism?**
Baptism is not someone trying to earn God's love. It is a public declaration that Jesus has saved them, brought them near, and given them a new identity.
- 3. If you have been baptized as a follower of Jesus, what did your baptism declare about who you belong to?**
- 4. If you have not been baptized, or if you are unsure where you stand with Jesus, what questions does this passage raise for you?** No pressure to answer a certain way. Honest questions are welcome.
- 5. What is one sentence from this passage or conversation you want to carry with you this week?** Examples: Jesus steps toward sinners. I do not have to prove myself to be loved by God. In Christ, I belong. The Father speaks delight, not performance.

OPTIONAL PRACTICE: A QUIET MOMENT WITH GOD

Invite the group to sit quietly for one minute.

Say: *As you sit in silence, imagine the loudest banner over your life. Then bring it honestly before Jesus. You do not have to force anything. Simply ask: "Jesus, what would it mean for Your grace to be louder than this?"*

After silence, ask:

- 1. What was that like for you?**
- 2. Was it easy, difficult, uncomfortable, peaceful, or something else?** No one has to share.

Closing Prayer

You can pray this, or invite others to pray short prayers.

LEADER REMINDER - The win is not that every question gets answered. The win is that people leave feeling:

- **Seen** in what they are carrying
- **Heard** by the group
- **Invited** toward Jesus through His Word
- **Less alone** in their questions, struggles, and longing for grace