

FESTIVE



WHET THE APPETITE

Welcome to the adventure that is Mark's Gospel. This is God's very special message to us concerning His Son and all He said and did. But this is not just history; this is the living word of God, meant to achieve a purpose in our lives (check Isaiah 55:11 and Hebrews 5:12).



We have designed it like this because this is how the Gospel itself is organised- Mark's Gospel centres around the identity of Jesus and the crucial question in Mark 8 :29: "Who do you say I am?" From what he has experienced so far, Peter knows that Jesus is the Christ, but he still has to learn what it means that "The son of Man would suffer....."



There are 10 studies in this guide that focus on the central question in life and the Gospels – Who is Jesus? The studies cover ten topics and can be divided into 2 sets of 5:

Sessions 1-5: Jesus begins His

Sessions 6-10: Jesus faces the cross ministry



The Crossway Bible Guide to Mark by David Hewitt is good if you are looking for some help. You should be able to get one at a local Christian Bookshop, from a church leader or online from www.ivpbooks.com



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IDENTITY

Session 1: Mark 15:37–39

Key Verse

“This man really was the Son of God.”

Mark 15:39

Way In

Have you ever walked into a film halfway through and wondered what’s going on? What information did you need to know to make sense of the film and how did you go about obtaining it? (And did you annoy people in the process?!)

Pray

Read

Mark 15:37–39

Reflection & Action

Mark’s gospel is all about “who Jesus is”, and how we ought to respond to this (Mark 8:29).

- 1 Who do you think Jesus is?
- 2 What does He mean to you?
- 3 How does this affect your life?

Pray

Get the “Big Picture” – Try to read Mark’s Gospel all the way through this week. It should take you about an hour.

Glossary

“**The curtain of the temple**” – was a huge curtain in the Jewish Temple. It symbolised that our sin cuts us off from knowing God.

“**Messiah**” – Hebrew for ‘chosen one’. Basically, Jesus is God’s chosen message, rescuer and ruler.

We don’t need to figure this out! Mark has actually told us right at the beginning of his Gospel who the star of his story is–

“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.” (Mark 1:1)



THE CALL

Session 2: Mark 1:14–20

Key Verse

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

Mark 1:17

Reflection & Action

- 1 Do you think Jesus still calls people today? Share some examples.
- 2 What does it mean for us to ‘fish for people’?

Way In

If you were starting a movement with the aim of changing the world, how would you go about recruiting people to help you?

Pray

Spend some time praying for the people in your school or college. Pray that they would come to follow Jesus.

Pray

Read

Mark 1:14–20

Glossary

“Repent” – to feel truly sorry to God about our wrongful actions and attitudes

Questions

- 1 At the beginning of the passage Jesus shares his mission statement. What strikes you about it?
- 2 Why does Jesus place so much emphasis on changing hearts and lives and believing in the good news of God?
- 3 Why do you think the first people Jesus called to follow him were ordinary people and not religious leaders?



THE MISSION

Session 3: Mark 2:1 – 12

Key Verse

“When Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralysed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”

Mark 2:5

Reflection & Action

- 1 Do you find it easy to show people the full picture of Jesus – the one who came to deal with sin?

Way In

You have been praying for a friend for ages who comes to you and asks to know in no more than one minute, just who Jesus is and what he came to do. Share how you would respond.

Pray

Think of one or two people you know who don't know Jesus. Pray for them in the group now.

Pray

Read

Mark 2:1-12

Glossary

“Teachers of the law” – These men were religious leaders who were professionally trained in teaching and applying the law.

“Son of Man” – In the Old Testament God said He would give His authority to a person with this title. The Son of Man would rule the world. See Daniel 7:13-14

Questions

- 1 Think about the parable in a modern context. The paralytic had been that way from birth, pretty much a no hope case. Who are today's equivalents? What would we want to say to them about Jesus?
- 2 What is surprising about Jesus' response to the paralytic?
- 3 Why does he go on to heal the man?
- 4 Having looked at this passage, what does it tell us about how Jesus sees people's main need?
- 5 Does this make you alter the way you might answer your friend who asked you to tell you about Jesus in one minute?



THE RESPONSES

Session 4: Mark 4:1 – 20

Key Verse

"Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop – some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

Mark 4:20

Way In

Have you ever taken a non-Christian friend to hear the Gospel and been disappointed at their lack of response? Why do people find it hard to believe?

Pray

Read

Jesus tells a story (v1-9), tells those listening why he used stories (v10-12) and explains the seed story (v13-20).

Mark 4:1-20

Questions

Imagine the scene: afternoon sunshine on the lake, loads of people and Jesus telling a story which He ends "YOU PEOPLE WHO CAN HEAR ME, LISTEN!" (paraphrase of verse 9).

- 1 How does this fit in with the story? What can He mean?
- 2 What kind of responses does Jesus say people make to the Gospel message?
- 3 Does it surprise you that ultimately 3 out of 4 responses are to reject the good news they hear? How does that affect your disappointment with your friend?

- 4 Sower and soil play a big part in this story. What parts do God, a Christian and an unbeliever play in the way evangelism works?

Reflection & Action

- 1 Share ideas about how you, individually and as a group, can help your friends hear the Good News.
- 2 Should you be praying more regularly for people and your school or college generally?

Pray

Keep on praying for your family and friends who don't yet know Jesus. Also, pray for those in your school or college who need Jesus. Pray about the ideas you came up with to tell people the Good News of Jesus.

Glossary

"Parable" – Jesus often taught in parables – understandable stories cleverly designed to uncover a truth about God.

"The Twelve" – Jesus' disciples.

"The Kingdom of God" – People who recognise their sin and have been forgiven through Jesus' death and resurrection.



THE NEED

Session 5: Mark 6:30 – 44

Key Verse

“But he answered ‘YOU give them something to eat.’”

Mark 6:37

Way In

When the going gets tough what do we do? Come on now – be honest!

Pray

Read

Mark 6:30-44

Questions

- 1 Jesus and his disciples were going off to get some well-earned rest. What do these opening verses tell us about the way Jesus did his ministry? It might be helpful to flick back to Mark 1:35-39.
- 2 How did Jesus see the crowds that followed him?
- 3 What problem did the disciples have? How does what follows show us how we should deal with big problems?
- 4 What does this miracle tell us about Jesus?

Reflection & Action

- 1 Think of some of the situations you are facing as an individual or as a group. Share them, not forgetting to think about what part you should play in the answer!
- 2 Do we really care about the needs of our non-Christian friends – or do we only get interested if we think they might become believers?

Pray

Use your reflections as topics for prayer today – pray for situations faced and for the ability to have compassion for your not yet Christian friends.

Glossary

“Apostles” – Jesus’ disciples



THE COST

Session 6: Mark 8:27 – 9:1

Key Verse

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it."

Mark 6:37

Reflection & Action

- 1 It is really tough to tell people there is a cost to being a Christian.
- 2 Is it honest to skip this bit?
- 3 How can we help people to weigh up the options?

Way In

Ever since the time of Jesus people have said "There is time enough for me to become a Christian. First I want to enjoy myself, really live, then I'll do this God thing." What kind of things would you say to your friends who think like this?

Pray

Pray

You have already been praying for people to get to know Jesus – keep going but now pray for each other that through your friendship you might have the opportunity to share the good news with them and answer some of the tougher questions they ask.

Read

Mark 8:27 – 9:1

Glossary

"When he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels" is referring to the day Jesus will return.

Questions

- 1 What priorities does Jesus have for his life?
- 2 What priorities does He expect from his followers?
- 3 It might be great to follow Jesus with a "no cost option". Why is this not possible?
- 4 Jesus says He is coming back with his Father's glory and with the holy angels. How does this encourage you in the choices you make?



THE RETURN

Session 7: Mark 13:20 – 37

Key Verse

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

Way In

If you knew that Jesus was returning 6 days from now – how would you change your plans?

Pray

Read

Mark 13:20 – 37

Questions

- 1 Why are people tempted to believe false prophets?
- 2 How will we know it is Jesus when he returns?
- 3 Until that time when he returns, how are we to make sure we are ready?
- 4 What might it mean for a follower of Jesus to be “found sleeping” when he returns?

Reflection & Action

- 1 So if Jesus did return next week, would you be prepared? How can you help each other to be better prepared?
- 2 How do we cope with people telling us about prophets and great signs and wonders? What should cause us to rejoice and what should make us concerned?

Pray

You will know the sort of things that people would rather believe in than Jesus – pray that your friends would want to find out more about Jesus. Pray for each other that you may know how to be ready for what Jesus calls you to do.

Glossary

“The elect, whom he has chosen” – Christians



THE HEART

Session 8: Mark 14:32 – 42

Key Verse

“Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Mark 14:36

Way In

Have you ever had to own up to having done something wrong, knowing that you would be in trouble for it? How did you feel about it, and what happened?

Pray

Pray

Share prayer needs and pray with each other.

Read

Mark 14:32 – 42

Questions

- 1 Jesus is very “distressed and troubled” – why?
- 2 Did Jesus deserve this punishment?
- 3 What does this tell us about Jesus?
- 4 How did Jesus know he had to go the way of the cross?
- 5 What does this tell us about Jesus’ relationship to his Father... and to us?
- 6 Jesus asked his disciples to “watch and pray” with him – why?
- 7 What do the disciples’ actions tell us about them?

Reflection & Action

- 1 Jesus was prepared to go through unimaginable torture and pain so that we might be able to enter the kingdom of God. What are we prepared to do to tell our friends about Jesus?
- 1 Jesus knew he couldn’t do this alone and asked his disciples to support him – what are we going to do to support one another this week?



THE CROSS

Session 9: Mark 15:21 – 41

Key Verse

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Mark 15:34

Way In

If you went out and asked the students you met ‘Why did Jesus die?’, what answers do you think you would get?

Pray

Read

Mark 15:21 – 41

Questions

1 Lots of people were gathered at Golgotha and Mark draws attention to each one. What did the cross mean to them?

- A Simon from Cyrene (v21)
- A Soldiers (v22-24)
- A Two rebels (v27)
- A People walking by (v29)
- A Chief priests and teachers (v31)
- A Those standing near (v35-36)
- A Centurion (v39)
- A The women (v40-41)

2 How does the darkness over the land, Jesus’ cry from the cross and the Temple curtain ripping from top to bottom help us understand that Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15)?

Reflection & Action

- 1 Spend some time thinking together what it cost Jesus to die in our place.
- 2 How should we respond?
- 3 What actions can we take to demonstrate our response?

Pray

Thank Jesus for dying on the Cross. Pray for each other, the Christian Group at college/school, the youth groups you belong to & your church, that the message of the Cross will be shared.

Glossary

“Darkness” – symbolises God’s judgement.

“The curtain of the temple” – was a huge curtain in the Jewish Temple. It symbolised that our sin cuts us off from knowing God.

“Crucifixion” – Usually, the condemned man, after being whipped, dragged the crossbeam to the place of punishment, where the upright shaft was already fixed in the ground. Stripped of his clothing, he was bound fast with outstretched arms to the crossbeam or nailed firmly to it through the wrists. The crossbeam was then raised high against the upright and made fast to it about 9 to 12 feet from the ground. Next, the feet were tightly bound or nailed. Over the criminal’s head was placed a notice stating his name and his crime. Death, apparently caused by exhaustion or heart failure, could be hastened by breaking the leg. (Summary from the Encyclopaedia Britannica)



THE COME BACK!

Session 10: Mark 16:1 – 8

Key Verse

"You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen! He is not here."

Mark 16:6

Way In

We are used to the idea that Jesus rose from the dead, but take time to think together just how unbelievable it must have seemed at the time.

Pray

Read

Mark 16 v 1-8

Questions

- 1 Many people like to try and claim that Jesus never rose from the dead. Pick out all the very realistic descriptions of this account you have just read together.
- 2 Look carefully at the angel's message for there are lots of pieces of information in it. What are they all?
- 3 In his gospel Mark always tells how people react. Why did the women say nothing? What did they need to give them the calmness and boldness to share what they had witnessed?

Reflection & Action

The message of the New Testament is that "Jesus died, was buried and that he was raised from the dead on the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

- 1 How often do we share the message of the Risen Jesus with our friends?

Pray

The same mighty power that raised Jesus is available to work in our lives and the lives of those who seek him. Take time to pray for each other, your Christian Group and your college.

Glossary

You might wonder about the ending of the gospel or someone might ask you about it. The best answer is that Mark wrote as far as verse 8 leaving people as he did to react to what he had written. A disciple of his, feeling that this was a bit stark added a rounded ending using events Mark had spoken about. None of what we find here is new. We can find longer accounts of the same events in other gospels.



USER FRIENDLY GUIDES TO THE BIBLE

What are they?

UFGs are short Bible studies, designed for Christian Groups with not much time to meet.

They are aimed at guiding you into a deeper love for Jesus. The format is simple: you dig into the Bible to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying and then you think and pray through the impact of His word into your lives.

How long do they take?

They can take anything from 15 minutes upwards. Most of the questions are open questions, so that more discussion can take place. You can always ask extra questions such as: "What do other people think?" "What makes you say that?" "Why do you think that's so important?".

Why study the Bible in our Group, shouldn't we just focus on outreach?

The whole point of the Bible is to reveal Jesus. The more you see of Jesus, the more you love Him and want to talk about Him and live for Him. So the best way to get fuelled and fired up for talking to people about Jesus, is to get to know and love Him through the Bible.

What else do we need?

Aside from the study questions, everyone will need to be able to see the passage. Encourage everyone in the Group to bring their own Bible and have a couple spare for visitors. The Bible version used in this guide is NIV. Ideally someone in the group should read through the study beforehand and lead the time you spend together. If you want any help in preparing your study, please email:
info@festive.org.uk

