

MARK

THE CROWN AND CROSS OF JESUS

Personal Devotion

A lot of us want to read the Bible regularly but don't know how or where to start. As we begin our new series on the Gospel according to Mark, we are creating a plan that will help you reach your goal.

HERE IS WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO DO: Commit to spending at least one day each week reading and meditating on Mark's Gospel. Each Monday, we will send out a Personal Devotion Worksheet¹ which will help you consider the passage within Mark that will be preached on the following Sunday. The Worksheet will include the following structure² to aid you in your time of personal devotions:



WHAT STANDS OUT?

Is there anything that I view as important or particularly strikes my attention about this passage?



WHAT IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND?

Is there anything about this passage that I need more information on or don't completely understand?

¹ Week 1's Personal Devotion Worksheet can be found on the last page of this packet

² The structure for the Personal Devotion Worksheet was loosely adapted from *One-to-One Bible Reading* by David Helm



WHAT DOES THIS TELL ME ABOUT JESUS?

How does this passage help me to better understand who Jesus is and what He has done for me?



WHAT DO I DO?

How does this passage challenge (or confirm) the way I live (beliefs, words, actions, attitudes, etc.)?



HOW DO I PRAY?

How do I specifically ask the Lord to help me apply these truths to my life?

Begin and end each time of Personal Devotion with prayer. We are utterly in need of God's Spirit to help us in discerning and applying his word and so it is right for us to ask for his guidance.

Family Worship

The Bible clearly teaches us of our responsibility to train our children in the truth of God's word. But as parents, it is no secret that family worship can be daunting. *"What am I supposed to say? What should I be doing?"* As we begin to study Mark's Gospel, our hope is not just that we would be personally helped, but that the Scriptures would also strengthen and mature our families. Here are some suggestions³ on how to incorporate our study of Mark into your family devotions:

SET REASONABLE GOALS:

- If you're currently not doing family devotions, set a simple goal of gathering together a few times a week.
- Here are the three ingredients for family worship: Sing. Read. Pray. Sing a song. Read a passage. Pray together. That's it!
- Don't feel the need to make it long. Taking a longer time doesn't necessarily make your devotions better; instead make it long enough to have it be meaningful.
- Find a time that works for your family. Mealtimes (breakfast or dinner) or right before bed are great options.

TRY TO INCORPORATE EVERYONE: have different people read, pray, pick a song, or answer questions each time.

BE CREATIVE AND FLEXIBLE:

- If age appropriate, try singing music along with hand-held instruments (e.g. shakers, bells, blocks, etc.)
- Parents or children can act out the passage as it's being read, which may help engagement and retention.

³ You may also want to consider a commentary on Mark written for children: [Mark's Marvelous Book: Learning about Jesus through the Gospel](#) by Alan Mann

READ MARK TOGETHER:

- Read the passage for the week from Mark together during Family Worship
- All or some of the questions from the Personal Devotion Worksheet can be used with your children by simply rewording them:
 - "What was your favorite part of the story?"
 - "What was confusing for you to understand?"
 - "What did you learn about Jesus?"
 - "What do you think God is teaching you to do through this story?"
 - "How should we ask God to help us do those things?"

NEED MORE IDEAS?

- Try creating post-it notes for the big idea (the main point of the passage), application points, and/or items for prayer. This can be a great way to help children review ideas that were previously discussed, think through how they're doing in applying these truths to their life, and seeing how God answers their prayers.
- Try memorizing a verse from Mark together. Maybe choose a verse a week or every two weeks, depending on age. Try hanging up a copy of the verse at different places in your home during that time.

Gospel Communities on Mission (GCM)

As we've done in the past, we'll continue studying the Scriptures together during GCM. Every other week, we'll gather together to discuss the sermon from Mark that was preached during the previous Sunday. This will enable us to further study and encourage one another from God's word within the context of community.

One-to-One Bible Reading

We have spent this last season discussing mission using *Honest Evangelism* by Rico Tice. As we continue to grow as individuals and as a church in mission, we would like for you to consider a practical way through which you can engage your non-Christians friends with the gospel: One-to-One Bible Reading⁴. One-to-One is something a Christian does with another person, on a regular basis, for a mutually agreed upon length of time, with the intention of reading through and discussing a book or a part of a book of the Bible.

Consider this from researcher Ed Stetzer:

One of the questions that we asked them to agree or disagree with was: "I'd be willing to study the Bible if a friend asked me to." Well, among twenty-somethings, 61 percent said, "Yes." And among their older counterparts of 30 and above, 42 percent said, "Yes." And that was a statistically significant difference, telling us there's something going on, there's an

⁴ This is a method taken from *One-to-One Bible Reading* by David Helm

*openness that's there. So we're seeing that as an opportunity—that in the midst of maybe some negative views of the church, there is also some openness to the things of God.*⁵

Who may be in your life that's open to things of God? Reading the Bible with a person one-to-one may be a great for someone to come to a genuine understanding of the gospel message and, perhaps, make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

We highly recommend you to read the entirety of *One-to-One Bible Reading* by David Helm, but below you can find an overview of this method:

HOW DO YOU GET STARTED⁶?

1. **PRAY** – “Start by praying that God will lead you to someone to whom he is already looking to reveal more of himself. To put the importance of this first step of prayer another way: as a consequence of prayer, people will come to recognize Jesus for who he is, they will learn what it is to be his disciple, and they will be equipped to serve him well.”
2. **INVITE** – “The second step to reading the Bible one-to-one is both the simplest and probably the hardest. Once you know who you want to ask, you must then ask them. It requires some boldness... In fact, the greatest hindrance to inviting someone to read one-to-one will be an unbiblical view that you are not ready for this. You will tell yourself that you haven't been properly trained, or simply don't know enough about the Bible to help another person along the way. In fact, you may even try to convince yourself that someone should be initiating reading the Bible one-to-one with you, rather than you initiating it with another person. It's a tempting thought. But it's also just not true. Any committed Christian is capable of initiating a good conversation on a biblical text. In reality, your fears in this area of personal work betray two lies that every Christian must resist. First, that gospel growth depends on us and on our abilities. This is simply not the case. Our proficiency in the Bible is not the final arbiter in seeing spiritual growth occur. The Holy Spirit can and does use timid people just like us. The second lie we fight against is disbelief—disbelief in the potency of God's word. We need to be reminded that God does his work in his way, and it is his word that accomplishes whatever he desires in the world. Be encouraged! Invite someone to read the Bible with you. Rest on the power of the gospel that is in his word. And know that, in the power of the Spirit and through the instrumentality of his word, God will honor your commitment to be in discussion with someone on the message of the gospel.”
3. **PLAN TO MEET** – “Third, after your friend or family member accepts your invitation to read the Bible one-to-one with them, set up a meeting to get started.”

⁵ Ed Stetzer, How Unbelievers View the Church, radio program, The Albert Mohler Program, 30 July 2009. For more on this see Stetzer's book (with Richie Stanley and Jason Hayes): *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them*, B&H Publishing Group, Nashville, 2009.

⁶ Steps taken from: Helm, David (2012-04-02). *One-to-One Bible Reading* (Kindle Location 143). Matthias Media. Kindle Edition.

WHAT CAN A TYPICAL MEETING LOOK LIKE?

1. **FOLLOW AN 8-SESSION PLAN TO READ MARK'S GOSPEL TOGETHER** - You're already immersing yourself in Mark's Gospel. Why not also read it with a non-Christian friend? Below you will find an 8-week reading plan that helps you to read major portions within Mark for a defined time period.
2. **USE THE PERSONAL DEVOTION STRUCTURE** - The structure from the Personal Devotions Worksheet can still be used in your One-to-One meetings. It may be helpful to provide your reading partner with an overview of what this structure is like. Also, since your partner is not a Christian, they may not have much to offer when discussing "What do I do?" and "How do I pray?" That's okay. Feel free to share with them some of the things that you're considering for yourself in those areas.
3. **SCHEDULE YOUR NEXT GATHERING** - Look forward to the next session by defining the date and time as you conclude. Make your meetings regular enough so that there isn't a large gap between meetings, but also not too often where it can become overwhelming.

HELPFUL TIPS

- Use your first meeting to just talk through logistics (e.g. book you will be reading, frequency of meeting, structure, etc.)
- Define how long your meetings will be - an hour is ideal amount of time.
- If you don't know the person very well, be sure to find time to get to know each other as you meet.
- You may or may not pray before or after your meeting based on your friend's comfort level. You may decide not to pray if you think it will be too off-putting for your friend.
- You can decide together whether any "preparation" is necessary prior to the meeting (e.g. reading the passage beforehand, coming with the structure questions already filled out, etc.) There is no set way to do this so it depends on your preferences.

8-WEEK READING PLAN FOR MARK'S GOSPEL (CREATED BY DAVID HELM)

1. Mark 1:1-15
2. Mark 2:1-12
3. Mark 3:7-35
4. Mark 8:22-38
5. Mark 10:17-45
6. Mark 14:53-15:15
7. Mark 15:16-39
8. Mark 15:42-16:8

MARK: THE CROWN AND CROSS OF JESUS

PERSONAL DEVOTION :: WEEK OF JANUARY 17 : MARK 1:1-8

[1] The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. [2] As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, [3] the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" [4] John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [5] And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. [6] Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. [7] And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. [8] I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."



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