



THE GOSPEL OF
Mark

Leading a Virtual Study?

While in-person Bible studies are always the best option, they may not be possible. As you follow campus guidelines for in-person gatherings, you may need to take your study virtual. If so, we have you covered!

VIRTUAL DISCOVERY KIT

Open your Virtual Discovery Kit online using the the link below. Find helpful resources to use in conjunction with this guide including visuals to screen share during the study, and more.

[BIT.LY/VIRTUAL-KIT](https://bit.ly/virtual-kit)

About Samuel

Who is Jesus, really?

Today, people often think of Jesus as a religious teacher, a historical person, or a divine figure. However, when Jesus first entered the public scene, no one thought of him that way. In fact, no one knew him at all. He was just another normal guy. That is until he started performing supernatural miracles and saying controversial things that defied the cultural and political systems of his day.

All the while, the people surrounding Jesus constantly wondered, “Who is this guy? What is he trying to accomplish? And how should we respond to him?”

These were the very questions a young man, named John Mark, wrestled with as he heard the story of Jesus. Thankfully, Peter, one of Jesus’ closest followers, was there to address his questions and share his personal experience with Jesus.

It was through this exciting, shocking, and ultimately life transforming story about Jesus that moved Mark to write the Gospel of Mark, which we’ll be following through this study.

Whether your friends are already following Jesus or considering what that means for the first time, we hope that all of you would come to see him in a new and deeper way!

How to Use This Guide

As you know, Bible Study is a vital part of leading a small group, but it's not the *only* part. Building friendships and following up outside of the study is crucial to leading a transformative group. This Leader's Guide is designed to help you lead both inside and outside of your group.

STUDY BREAKDOWN



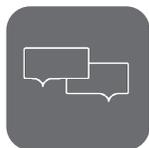
THE PASSAGE

Each study begins with the portion of Scripture that you'll be exploring that week.



BEFORE THE STUDY

This section is designed to enrich your own personal understanding of each passage as you prepare to lead your friends.



DURING THE STUDY

This section provides you with everything needed to lead an engaging study. Pay attention to section headers and pacing icons.



AFTER THE STUDY

This section is designed to help you capture what God is doing in the lives of your friends and identify ways to help them grow closer to Jesus outside of the study.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS



PACING ICONS

Keep track of how much time the section should take



LEARN & LEAD

Lead well by learning more with InterVarsity's online training and resources



GO DEEPER

Go deeper into the passage with Bible Project's explainer videos

How to Lead Study

Leading an engaging study is the best way for your friends to encounter and follow Jesus! Below are the three parts to every study. For more training, visit howto.bible.

SHAPE OF DISCOVERY STUDY



ENTERING THE PASSAGE

What does it say?

The goal while entering the passage is to observe what it says. Use the prompts in this section to help your group understand the background, identify the facts (e.g. who, what, when, where, etc.), and engage their senses and emotions. The key is to be curious and ask questions about everything!



DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

What does it mean?

The goal while discussing the passage is to interpret what it means. Use the prompts in this section to gather and discuss observations and questions. While observations focus on the what, interpretation questions focus on the why. The key is to discover why the author wrote this passage, what they were trying to communicate, and how the original audience would have understood it.



APPLYING THE PASSAGE

What does it mean to me, us, and our world?

The goal while applying the passage is to discover what it means for us and how we are meant to live our lives differently in light of it. Use the prompts in this section to summarize, clarify, and respond to the meaning of the passage. The key is to seek transformation, not just more information - about the Bible!

Discussion Guidelines

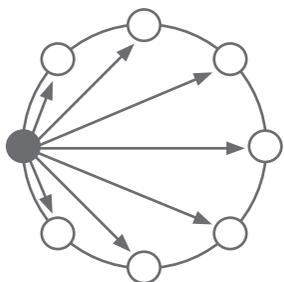
Review the Discussion Guidelines below as you begin the first few studies. Revisit them any time someone new attends. This will help everyone know what to expect.

PARTICIPATION IS CRUCIAL

In a Traditional Study, the *Leader* uses *their* questions to drive the discussion. However, in a Discovery Study, it's the *group's* questions that drive the discussion. Discovery Studies are more engaging and interactive, but they only work if everyone participates.

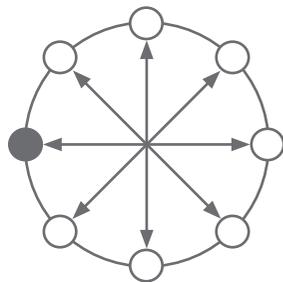
TRADITIONAL STUDY

Leader Driven



DISCOVERY STUDY

Group Driven



ASSUME YOU KNOW NOTHING

Whether the passage being studied is very familiar or completely foreign, it's best for everyone to assume they are reading it for the first time.

Sometimes knowing something can keep you from seeing something new. Focus on the passage and keep outside knowledge to a minimum.

BE REAL

Small Groups aren't just Bible Studies. They're communities, and the best communities are real and authentic. No one is perfect and everyone has questions so be real with one another.

HAVE SOME RESPECT

Everyone does not have to agree, but everyone must respect each other. The best discussions have multiple viewpoints.

Discussion Tips

Use the tips below to facilitate a great discussion. For more tips, visit InterVarsity's [howto.bible](#).

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

Context First. Then Handouts.

Always give context (i.e. Prior to Passage) first before giving handouts. Context is critical but people tend to stop listening when given handouts.

Embrace Silence

Silence can be awkward but it's crucial for studying the passage. Silent study will make for better sharing later. Give people between 3-5 minutes of silent study.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

Facilitate First. Then Share.

When discussing questions, don't share your thoughts right away. Focus on facilitating the discussion first. Then share.

Avoid Long Tangents

People lose focus with long tangents. Refocus your group by either repeating the original question or asking the next one.

Involve Everyone

Try to get everyone to share at least once during each study. Keep asking, "What do others think?"

Text the Answer

Use the passage rather than opinions to answer questions—"Where do you see that in the passage?"

Keep It Moving

Don't wait for the discussion to die before asking the next question. Move on as the discussion begins to slow.

Use Quick Recaps

Quickly summarize the story before moving on to next section of text. It helps build tension and momentum.

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

Use Group Lingo

Use the group's language rather than the guide's as much as possible. It will feel more personal and natural.

Choose One Application

Discuss only *one* Application Option. Choose the one that best fits your group's discussion.

Weekly Preparation

Preparation is crucial to leading a great study! Set aside one hour each week to prepare. If other leaders are using the same study, prepare together! For more on preparing, visit howto.bible/how-prepare.



STUDY PASSAGE 45 MIN

Before you consider what God has for your friends, consider what he has for you. Study the passage and apply it to your own life first. The best leaders lead from personal experience.



REVIEW LEADER GUIDE 10 MIN

Review the study in the Leader Guide and familiarize yourself with the questions and content. The more familiar you are with the guide the less you'll have to reference it during the study, which frees you up to focus on the discussion.



PRAY 5 MIN

Pray that the LORD would meet you and your friends through each study, and watch for how he shows up!



INVITE

Invite by sharing *why* not *what*. Rather than just sharing the place, time, and content of your study (i.e. the what), share why people might enjoy coming to your study (i.e. the why).

Consider your why. Is it to ask questions about faith? Grow in faith? Grow closer as friends? Learn how God can use us to make a difference? Clarify your "why," and then share it!

First time invitations are best done in-person. However, a text reminder the day of each study is also helpful.

Study Plan

Study	Date	Time	Location
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			

DATE & TIME

There is rarely a perfect time for everyone. Just pick a time that works for most people and be consistent.

LOCATION

Choose a place that is quiet, relaxed, and familiar to your group.

HOSPITALITY

Make people feel at home with snacks, drinks, and a comfortable setting. Invite your friends to bring snacks as well.

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Mark 2:1-12

¹ A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins

are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, ¹¹ "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"



Before the Study

PREPARING

In order to better understand the meaning of a passage, it's critical to know how the *original audience* would have heard it. The context below has been provided for you to better understand the world in which these listeners lived. It will also be helpful in answering cultural questions that arise during the study.

 BibleProject

OVERVIEW OF MARK

How do these passages fit into the larger story of Jesus? Watch the "Read Scripture" video at bibleproject.com/explore/mark

Paralyzed Man (v.3)

In this culture, a popular belief was that chronic health issues were caused by sin. If you had issues, you must be doing something wrong. Note that while this was not always the case (John 9:1-3), this man probably felt disconnected from God as a result of his paralysis and the popular belief. He probably spent his days begging just to survive.

Digging (v.4)

Roofs in this time consisted of branches laid over wooden beams covered with dried mud. They were sturdy enough to walk on, but easy enough to dig through.

Forgiveness (v.5)

It was ardently believed that only God had the authority to forgive sins. In Jesus' day, forgiveness could only be administered via a priest on God's behalf through a sacrifice after public confession.

Teachers of the Law (v.6)

These teachers were like the religious law professors of the day. They devoted their life to knowing God's law and its punishments, and they knew when someone was crossing it.

Blaspheme (v.7)

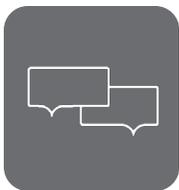
Claiming authority to do things that only God could do (e.g. forgiving sins) was considered a form of blasphemy, which was an offense punishable by death according to the law (Leviticus 24:16).

Son of Man (v.10)

At this time in history, the Roman Empire controlled most of the known world including Israel. However, the Jewish people long believed that one day God would send a divine leader to overthrow their foreign oppressors and re-establish the nation of Israel (Daniel 7:13-14). All of their hope and desires for a better life depended upon the arrival of the Son of Man. Jesus primarily referred to himself as the Son of Man.

Get Up (v.11)

Miracles are not magic, and Jesus was not a magician. Miracles were performed with the specific purpose of revealing the authority and power of the person that performed them. Only someone with an intimate and divine connection with God could perform such an act.



During the Study

ENTERING THE PASSAGE 5-10 MIN

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Review the Discussion Guidelines (page six) before beginning.

PRIOR TO THIS PASSAGE

This is one of the earliest stories about Jesus. At this point, people hardly knew who Jesus was. He wasn't known as a religious or theological figure. He was just some random guy. However, just prior to this passage, Jesus had begun miraculously healing numerous people of various, incurable diseases in a small town called Capernaum. As you could imagine, Jesus became a local celebrity overnight. All of a sudden, everyone in town was talking about this Jesus guy. Now, after traveling around the local region for a while, Jesus has once again returned to Capernaum. Our story picks up as people gather to this see this random miracle worker for themselves.

READ ALOUD

Have three people read the passage aloud for the group. You can use the sections on the following page to assign verses to read.

CREATIVE ENTRY

Imagine you are in the crowd witnessing this event happen. How would you describe the experience to a friend who wasn't there? What details would you be sure to include?

STUDY SILENTLY

Invite everyone to reread the passage silently. Note who, where, when, and what. Imagine yourself in the story. Note repeated words, comparisons and contrasts. Develop questions for further discussion.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE 40 MIN

SHARE OBSERVATIONS. GATHER QUESTIONS.

First, invite everyone to share their observations. Then, gather questions asking for verse references and write them in their respective sections below. Do not discuss until everyone has shared. Finally, use the checkboxes to select no more than six questions to discuss.

DISCUSS QUESTIONS

Bound & Determined (v.1-5)

- Why did these men go through all the trouble to get this man in front of Jesus? (v.4)
- _____
- _____

Blaspheme?! (v.6-10)

- Why are the teachers of the law so angry about Jesus forgiving sins? (v.6)
- Why would Jesus forgive sins knowing it was strictly prohibited and potentially lethal? (v.10)
- _____
- _____

Something to Prove (v.11-12)

- What does this healing reveal about Jesus' authority? (v.11)
 - If some random person said they would pay off your student loans, you'd probably be interested but seriously skeptical. However, if you checked your balance and it was \$0.00, what would you think about this random person?
- _____
- _____

APPLYING THE PASSAGE



10-15
MIN

SUMMARY

This sold out crowd has heard stories of Jesus' miraculous healings, but now they want to see it for themselves. These four men are so eager to see Jesus heal their paralyzed friend that they damage someone's property to do so. Yet, rather than heal their friend as everyone expects, Jesus forgives him! Everyone knew that only God had the authority and ability to forgive sins, which is why the religious leaders were so angry. Claiming this kind of authority was on the verge of blasphemy, which was a crime punishable by death. So why would Jesus say it?! Because Jesus has something to prove. You can't prove someone's sins are forgiven, but you can't ignore a paralyzed man walking out of the room. Jesus doesn't just claim God-like authority. He proves it. The crowd has never seen anything like this because they've never seen God... until now.

BIG IDEA

There is more to Jesus than meets the eye. When we are determined to seek him out, he is faithful to reveal himself.

APPLICATION OPTIONS

Discuss *one* Application Option from the next page. Then finish by sharing The Bigger Story and Creative Response.

THE BIGGER STORY

If these four friends had reason to seek Jesus out, we have even more. In this day, forgiveness could only be administered via an ordained priest on God's behalf through the killing of a sacrifice. So where's the priest? Where's the sacrifice? It's *Jesus*. Jesus was the divine high priest who had authority to forgive sins. Yet rather than sacrificing something else, he sacrificed *himself*. On the cross, Jesus became the sacrificed needed to forgive humanity, and then came back to life to assert his authority over everything that would keep us from God including death itself.

CREATIVE RESPONSE

Depending on the comfort of your group, you can simply pray or creatively respond through journaling, music, or another form of prayer.

APPLICATION OPTIONS

The Real Obstacle

There is a stark contrast between the religious leaders and these four friends. Religious leaders knew everything there was to know about God. Yet, they were skeptical of Jesus. In contrast, these four friends hardly knew anything about Jesus. Yet, they were willing to destroy property just to see him. **How can our religious knowledge and experiences sometimes keep us from seeing Jesus for who he is? Or seeking him out? How can we seek to know Jesus in a new way this semester?**

New Semester. New Start.

In this culture, people with chronic health issues were sometimes considered to be sinful. The paralyzed man would have thought God wanted nothing to do with him because of his past and present condition. However, Jesus gives him a new start both in faith and life. **What are the things that lead us to believe God wants nothing to do with us? How might Jesus' actions here change the way you approach God this semester?**

Faithful Vandalism

The paralyzed man's life is transformed because of his friend's radical faith. Their belief that Jesus could heal drove them through multiple obstacles even to the point of destroying property. Our faith can make a difference in our friend's life. **Are their people in your life who don't know Jesus? What are the obstacles keeping them from knowing him? How could your faith play a key role in them coming to know Jesus?**

