

Discussion Guide

A 6-Week Introduction to the
Transformational Bible Study Method
with the GOSPEL of MARK

discovering

God's 
Word



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How To Use This Guide

Studying with a group offers encouragement, fellowship, and accountability as we dive into the Bible together. This discussion guide is a tool to help you get the most out of your meeting time.

Group members. Print and bring this guide with you each week along with your copy of *Discovering God's Word*. Complete the five lessons in the book in preparation for your meeting. The discussion questions in this guide are designed to be answered during the group meeting, not before.

Leaders. You'll want to review the week's recap and discussion questions to consider which you may want to use based on the length of your meeting. Adjust it to fit your group's needs.

Format: Each week's discussion sessions cover the corresponding five lessons in *Discovering God's Word* and contain the following components:

Transformational Truths. These spiritual truths capture the central idea of each lesson in Mark.

Bible Study Principles. This section summarizes foundational principles of effective Bible study.

Memory Verse. As a group, recite the memory verse from memory.

Recap and Discussion Questions. This five-part section revisits teachings covered in the daily lessons and offers discussion questions to encourage the group to share their thoughts and talk about what they've learned. Feel free to use the questions in this guide, the questions in the book, or some you've created.

Attributes of God. During this portion of the meeting, encourage your group to share any attributes of God they added to their list on pg. 221. Consider creating a master list for the group and adding to it each week.

Prayer. Begin and end each week with prayer. In this section you'll find a special prayer focus and activity for the ending prayer time. Consider providing notecards on which members can write a personal prayer request. After the closing prayer time, encourage members to trade their prayer request card with another member of their group and commit to pray for each other during the week.

Additional Resources on JeanWilund.com/DiscoveringGodsWord/

You can download and print free PDF's of the three Bible study questions (*Intent, Truth, and Transformation*), the *Transformational Truths*, and the *Bible Study Principles*. You'll also find links to concordances, Bible book introductions, and podcast episodes to enhance your study.

Week 1

A Firm Foundation

Mark 1:1–45

Transformational Truths

Which of the Transformational Truths stood out and why?

Day 1 — We'll never truly know the God of the Word apart from the Word of God.

Day 2 — It's never too late to be transformed. Christ restores, equips, and empowers His children.

Day 3 — What we think about God determines what we think about everything else.

Day 4 — Trials reveal the truth about our faith and God's faithfulness.

Day 5 — God's Word always does God's work in God's people.

Bible Study Principles

Which of the Bible Study Principles stood out and why?

Day 1

- ✓ Knowing the Bible author's *intent* helps us better interpret God's authoritative *truth*, which leads to authentic *transformation* for all who belong to Christ and believe His Word.
- ✓ Keep the *Intent*, *Truth*, and *Transformation* questions in mind whenever you study the Bible.

Day 2

- ✓ Intent Question: What did God intend His original audience to understand?
- ✓ The Bible was written *for* us, not *to* us.
- ✓ The Bible is one connected story. A question in one book is often answered in another.
- ✓ Bible handbooks and Study Bibles offer book introductions that summarize each Bible book's author, audience, date, and purpose for his message.

Day 3

- ✓ Truth Question, Part 1: What truths does God's Word reveal about the character, nature, and ways of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
- ✓ As you study, create T-charts of truths God's Word reveals about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Day 4

- ✓ Truth Question, Part 2: What truths does God's Word reveal about the character, nature, and ways of anyone or anything other than God?
- ✓ Do we see any character traits of what we're like either before or after we've trusted in Christ?
- ✓ What does the author want us to understand about ourselves?
- ✓ How does the setting, plot, characters, or objects in the passage reveal important truths?

Day 5

- ✓ Transformation Question: If I truly believe and act on what God has revealed in this passage, how will the desires and attitudes of my heart transform and my actions be different tomorrow? What does it look like to believe and obey?
- ✓ Transformation isn't about what we *can* do, but what we *will* do *if* we truly believe.
- ✓ No matter how much we master the Bible, until the Bible masters us, we'll remain unchanged.

Memory Verse — 2 Peter 1:3

- Recite this week's verse from memory as a group.
- Discuss how we can apply 2 Peter 1:3 to our having the ability to read and study God's Word rightly.

Recap and Discussion Questions

Day 1—Overview

Imagine the thunder of the ocean's waves, the majesty of cascading mountains, and the coolness of soft grass under your bare feet. God's soul-stirring creation declares His glory—the glory of their Creator. Along with the heavens, they shout His praise from the rising of the sun to its setting (Psalm 19:1, 113:3).

How do we know the majesty we see actually came from God?

How do we even know He exists?

We know because His Word tells us.

To truly know who God is, we need His written Word. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

To understand God's written Word, we need His Spirit and an effective Bible study method. Earthly minds can never understand the thoughts and ways of the Infinite without all three—God's Spirit, His Word, and an effective way to study it.

We'll use the Gospel of Mark to train ourselves to study His Word well while God uses Mark to transform us—if we truly believe what He says. (Excerpt, pg. 15)

To study the Bible effectively, we want to consider three steps—the Author's *Intent*, the authoritative *Truth* revealed in the passages, and what it looks like to respond to God's Word in faith—in a way that leads to true *Transformation*.

1. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).
 - a. Without using the Bible as your source, explain how we *know* the majesty of creation came from God and how we *know* He exists.
 - b. How well were you able to authoritatively state that the God of the Bible is our Creator?
 - c. Can you authoritatively describe any of God's attributes without His Word?
 - d. What conclusion does this lead us to concerning the importance of reading and knowing the Bible?

2. It's rare to find someone whose schedule isn't overloaded. Discuss any tips for prioritizing Bible study and creating a habit of faithfulness.

Day 2—Step One: Intent

Intent Question:

What did God intend His original audience to understand?

More than forty human authors wrote, as the Holy Spirit directed them, to the people of their day. As we study the Bible, our goal is to discern each verse's meaning as originally intended, including the identity of the human author (if given), his audience (as best indicated), and the main purpose God gave him for writing.

3. Review your answers to the questions about the author of the gospel of Mark on pg. 23.
4. Not all the Bible writers were nominees for "God's Man of the Year" when God first drew them to Himself. Mark deserted Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey.
Paul and Barnabas had such a sharp disagreement over Mark's failing, they broke up their missionary partnership. This is the same Paul who had been one of the fiercest persecutors of Christians and Christ's church.
Peter (Mark's mentor) denied Christ three times in Jesus's darkest hour.
James is commonly accepted as one of Jesus's brothers. Even though the angel Gabriel told both James's mother and father that Jesus (his brother) was the Son of God, James didn't believe in Him until after He rose from the dead.
Matthew was a hated tax collector who made his money by cheating his own people.
Discuss how God's choice of Mark as the writer of this gospel (as well as God's other Bible writer choices) encourages your faith in His forgiveness. How does this fuel your conviction to serve Christ—even if you're not an obvious choice for "Servant of the Year"?

Day 3—Step Two: Truth (Part 1)

Truth Question (Part 1):

What truths does God's Word reveal about the character, nature, and ways of our triune?

What we think about God determines what we think about everything else. He's our starting point for viewing everything in life. The better we know Him, the less deceived we are about everything else. He reveals truths about Himself on every page of the Bible.

An effective tool for studying these truths is a T-chart. Bullet point key information and truths into columns under keyword headings that reflects the main "character(s)" in the passage. The first and most important truths we want to note are those revealed in Scripture about our triune God. Note them on the left side of the paper.

5. Mark, our transformed servant and writer, opens his gospel like a Roman herald.
 - a. Read Mark 1:1 with the voice of a herald.

- b. Discuss the thrill of this historical moment when the gospel of Jesus Christ “began”—and the fact that the people had no idea.
- c. Share about a time when you experienced a life-changing moment and you were oblivious to it at the time. Maybe it’s when you first met your best friend or your spouse and had no idea what they’d mean to you one day. Or maybe God answered a long-awaited prayer, but you didn’t realize it yet.

Day 4—Step Two: Truth (Part 2)

Truth Question (Part 2):

What truths does God's Word reveal about the character, nature, and ways of anyone or anything other than our triune God?

You will be like God.

These deceitful words slithered from Satan’s tongue and enticed Eve to embrace a wretched lie about herself: I can be like God. I can decide for myself what is good and right. But God gave us a glorious solution. “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

God transforms even the vilest of the vile who know and trust in the Truth. As fallen creatures, however, we’re prone to trust the world’s philosophies, our own foolish wisdom, and even Satan’s lies more than Christ unless we truly know and believe what God has said about himself *and* about others.

Jesus warns us to be on our guard against sin and its traps, Satan and his schemes, the world and its enticements, and our own hearts both before and after we belong to Christ. (Matthew 10:16).

When you note truths onto your T-chart about anyone or anything other than God from the passage you’re reading, list them on the right side. As you study both sides of the chart, look for connections and spiritual truths to pop off the page, such as God’s holiness and our unholiness.

- 6. John the Baptist and Jesus’s disciples paid the highest price for following Christ. Discuss the comforting truth that they were never at Satan’s mercy. God’s power and purposes are always supreme.
- 7. If John or Jesus’s disciples were allowed to visit us today, what do you think they’d tell us about their “sacrifice” to obey and follow Christ compared to the rewards they’re enjoying now?

Day 5— Step Three: Transformation

Transformation Question:

If I truly believe and act on what God has revealed in His Word, how will the desires and attitudes of my heart transform and my actions be different tomorrow?

What does it look like to believe and obey?

God's Word always does God's work in God's people. His greatest work (and our greatest need) is spiritual salvation that changes us from sinner to saint, enemy of God to child of God, and condemned to redeemed. Once God saves us, He begins His next great work—our transformation, to make us more like His Son (Romans 8:29). God uses His Word to teach us; His Spirit to convict, encourage, and empower us; and our circumstances to give us endless opportunities for our faith to reveal what we truly believe.

Rather than ask what we need to do with what we've read in God's Word, which can develop a "works-based" faith, we ask what our actions will look like if we truly believe the truths.

Transformation isn't about what we *can* do, but what we *will* do if we truly believe (James 2:14–26). It's not enough to verbally agree with Christ that we *can* obey His Word. If we truly believe, we *will* obey. Obedience is the natural overflow of belief.

8. How does the Transformation step question help you better understand how to respond to God's Word by faith as an overflow of the heart versus a work of the flesh? How has it focused your response more on your heart versus your behavior?

Attributes of God

Share some of the attributes of God you listed on page 221.

Prayer Time

Praise God for His glorious attributes you shared in your discussion time and pray for any needs or struggles shared during the meeting—including the need to devote time for studying God's Word. Exchange prayer cards with another member in the group. Commit to pray for each other and to (compassionately) hold each other accountable to study God's Word.

Week 2

A Heart to Receive

Mark 2:1–5:43

Transformational Truths

Which of the Transformational Truths stood out and why?

Day 1 — The truth sets us free. Anything else destroys.

Day 2 — Christ is the overarching context of everything in life and Scripture.

Day 3 — When Christ redeems, fruitfulness follows.

Day 4 — Reverent fear of Christ calms all other fears.

Day 5 — Do not fear, only believe.

Bible Study Principles

Which of the Bible Study Principles stood out and why?

Day 1

- ✓ Assumptions are thoughts or ideas we believe to be true without putting much, if any, thought to them.
- ✓ When you study the Bible, lay down your assumptions and examine—not cross-examine—God’s Word through prayer, clarifying questions, and observation. Never put God’s Word on trial.

Day 2

- ✓ The Bible explains the motivations and desires of every heart—and it explains itself.
- ✓ The context of anything is its full setting.
- ✓ To understand Scripture’s true sense (and avoid nonsense) keep the text in its full context:
 1. Christ-centered context
 2. Biblical context
 3. Grammatical context
 4. Historical context
 5. Cultural context

Day 3

- ✓ When we understand the writing styles (genres), techniques (literary devices), and grammar, the Bible’s meaning opens up for us.
- ✓ Parables lay a simple and relatable illustration from everyday life beside a spiritual truth to clarify its meaning. That truth reflects principles of the kingdom of God, leads the hearer to respond, and reveals the true condition of his or her heart.

Day 4

- ✓ Notice *what* the authors say and *how* they say it.
- ✓ When you study the Bible, Notice. Each. Word.
- ✓ Notice verbs and nouns—especially repeated ones.
- ✓ Don’t miss the thingamabob words.
- ✓ Pay attention to sentence types.
- ✓ Consider nuances of meaning.
- ✓ Read the passages in different Bible translations.

Day 5

- ✓ The Bible authors' writing reflected their personalities, but they chose the styles and techniques that best proclaimed the message God directed them to write. Nothing is random.
- ✓ A *Markan Sandwich* is a story sandwiched between two interrupted halves of another story. The middle event spotlights the message, spiritual truth, or common theme of the sandwich. The two events relate to each other and help interpret each other.
- ✓ A *chiasm* is a writing technique that presents events, ideas, or truths and then repeats them in reverse order (ABBA).

Memory Verse — 2 Timothy 2:15

- Recite this week's verse from memory as a group.
- Share one tip you've learned this week about rightly handling God's Word.

Recap and Discussion Questions

Day 1—Assumptions

Assumptions are thoughts or ideas we believe to be true without putting much, if any, thought to them.

If we're not careful, we'll make wrong assumptions about the Bible. It's an ancient book, written to a vastly different audience, who spoke a language we don't understand, and it concerns deep spiritual truths. Whenever we don't understand what the Bible says, let's carefully examine—not cross-examine—the text to discover its true meaning. Let's develop a humble heart that's ready to receive God's Word and respond to it.

When we examine God's Word, we put it under a microscope of Holy Spirit-dependent prayer, clarifying questions, and careful observation so we can better understand what God wants us to know and believe through the passage.

When we cross-examine God's Word, we put it on trial and demand it answer to us and our beliefs, opinions, and assumptions.

Examining God's Word comes from a place of humility. Cross-examining it rises from pride.

1. Discuss the three tips for asking good clarifying questions on pg. 48. How did these tips help you in interpreting Mark 2:1–3:6?
2. Do you consider yourself a good question asker? Share some of the clarifying questions and assumptions you listed on page 50.

Day 2—Context

The context of anything is its setting. Whether we realize it or not, we draw our understanding based on whatever context we know. If we want to understand Scripture's true sense (and avoid nonsense) we need to keep the text in its full context—its Christ-centered, biblical, historical, cultural, and grammatical context.

It takes time to learn the context of the whole Bible, but simply remembering that context matters reaps immediate rewards. We're less likely to rush to an interpretation or to “modernize”

it. Instead, we're more likely to slow down, mentally step into the world of the Bible, and think more like ancient Hebrews.

3. Review the five types of context found on pg. 54. Discuss how context helped you discover why, in Mark 3:12, Jesus wouldn't let the demons speak, even though they were declaring the truth about His identity.

Day 3—Genres

Genres are categories of writing styles such as *narrative*, *parables*, and *prophecy*. Each genre follows rules that guide how we read and interpret the text's meaning. Each book of the Bible typically contains a variety of genres.

A parable lays a simple and relatable illustration from everyday life beside a spiritual truth to clarify its meaning. The spiritual truth's meaning reflects principles of the kingdom of God and leads the hearer to respond and reveal the true condition of his or her heart, whether it's full of faith or unbelief.

Jesus didn't tell parables to make truths easier to understand but rather, as He explains in today's passage, so insiders would understand and outsiders would not.

The template for understanding all of Jesus's parables is the first parable in Mark—the parable of the soils. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

4. Using the Parable of the Soils (see pg. 62–64) as your guide, work through the parable in Mark 4:26–29 or vv. 30–32 together. Note how God calls us to respond to the parable you chose.

Day 4—Grammar

The power of the Bible writers' word choices is not just in what they say but also in how they say it. By the Holy Spirit's direction, each biblical author selected his words carefully to convey the exact meaning he intended his readers to understand. Let's not modernize the original intended meaning.

The diligent work of translators allows us to read those authors' messages in our language, but remember, we're not reading their original words. Our translation can miss some of the power and nuances of the original ancient Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic—especially if we read too fast. When we study the Bible, we want to Notice. Each. Word.

5. Read Mark 4:40–41 aloud. (See pg. 69–71.)
 - a. How is our interpretation of the passage negatively affected if we don't realize that Mark wrote of two different types of *fear*—*deilos* fear (v. 40) and *phobeó* fear (v. 41).
 - b. How does it strengthen your faith in Christ when you understand the two word choices Mark made?
 - c. When was the last time Jesus could have asked you why you're so *deilos*—so afraid? Share your answer to this question and the others on pg. 71.

Day 5—Writing Styles

The Bible authors' writing reflected their personalities, but they chose the styles and techniques that best proclaimed the message God directed them to write. Nothing is random.

Mark wrote a Roman-styled, fast-paced narrative. One of his favorite words was immediately. He also had a taste for chiasms and for one writing technique so distinctive it's named after him: the Markan Sandwich.

6. Consider the Markan Sandwich in Mark 5:21–43. How does Mark's use of his sandwich technique help us better interpret the spiritual truths Jesus revealed in this passage?
7. Mark 5:21–43 is one of my favorite scenes in Mark's gospel. It's soul touching and faith building.
 - d. How do the two events in this sandwich move you to greater faith?
 - e. We don't have God's promise that every sick person we love will be healed on earth if we come to Jesus. But Jesus's call to Jairus is the same for all believers. "Do not fear, only believe." Discuss what it looks like to live by this command.

Attributes of God

Share any attributes of God you added to your list on page 221. How well are they taking root in your mind and being written on your heart?

Prayer Time

Set aside time before the end of the meeting for prayer. Praise God for His glorious attributes you shared in your discussion time and pray for any needs or struggles shared during the meeting.

Write your requests on a notecard and trade with another person in the group. Commit to pray for each other during the week.

Week 3

Eyes to See

Mark 6:1–8:38

Transformational Truths

Which of the Transformational Truths stood out and why?

Day 1 — Pride is the root—and fuel—of sin. Jesus is the cure.

Day 2 — No matter how much culture or history changes, Christ remains the same.

Day 3 — When the whole Bible shapes our doctrine, the Bible's doctrines shape us into the image of Christ. Know the Word. Know the Word. Know the Word.

Day 4 — If we don't learn to follow Christ in faith and humility, we'll follow the path to destruction and shame.

Day 5 — When Christ enters a life, He flips the script.

Bible Study Principles

Which of the Bible Study Principles stood out and why?

Day 1

- ✓ The events in the Bible happened in real time to real people. Historical context matters.
- ✓ For additional historical context, consult Scripture, commentaries, study Bibles, Bible encyclopedias, and trusted biblical resource websites.

Day 2

- ✓ Culture explains societies' behaviors and influences their choices. Seek to understand the cultures to better understand the text.
- ✓ The Bible often reveals the cultural context. Study Bibles, Bible encyclopedias, commentaries, and biblical resource websites can provide more information.

Day 3

- ✓ Doctrine is the teachings of the Bible that explain how we're to think and live like Christ (Ephesians 4:11–16).
- ✓ The whole Bible alone, not our culture and personal preferences, determines doctrine.
- ✓ God's Word is our perfect guardrail to keep us safe from false teachings.

Day 4

- ✓ The biblical authors chose the structure for their writings that best leads us to the truth God wants us to know. Find and follow the structure.
- ✓ Each event in a repeated series works together to highlight overarching spiritual truths.

Day 5

- ✓ Turning points in the Bible emphasize spiritual truths and move the reader to specific Christlike responses.
- ✓ In narratives, we look for a change in action. In epistles, we look for a change in teaching from what Christ has done to how we're to respond.

Memory Verse — Psalm 119:18

- Recite this week's verse from memory as a group.
- Create a list of verses to pray before you study the Bible either in the front of your Bible, on a notecard tucked into your Bible, or in a notes app on your phone. Include this verse.

Recap and Discussion Questions

Day 1—Historical Context

Have you thought about the fact that neither time nor history existed until God spoke the first word of creation?

Time is the progress of events in history. History is the record of events that happened in time. Without time, there's no history. There's only God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit existing in perfect unity outside of time.

If this thought doesn't break your brain, it ought to at least wrench it a little.

Historical context matters.

The Bible happened in real time to real people. Their history impacted them just as our history impacts how we live, think, and understand God's Word.

Whenever an author provides historical context, he intends the context to help direct the Scripture's interpretation.

1. In Mark 6:1–13, Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth.
 - a. Read Luke 4:16–30. How was Jesus received in Nazareth?
 - b. What did Jesus accomplish by returning to Nazareth? (See pg. 85).
2. In vv. 14–29, John the Baptist received a worse reception in Herod's home. Throughout history, the message of Christ has offended those who don't have ears to hear because the gospel confronts us with our sin. Pride is the root—and fuel—of sin. Jesus is the cure.

Like the cross, what our enemies and Satan intend for evil, God has always intended, and accomplishes, for good (Romans 8:28–29).

 - a. How might God have intended John's death to accomplish good?
 - b. Share an example from your life (or another's life) that reflects the truth of Romans 8:28–29.

Day 2—Cultural Context

Culture is the way a society lives. It includes the people's beliefs, customs, and lifestyle. Every society has a distinct culture that explains their behavior and influences their choices. The ancient cultures can confuse and often even outrage us. Let's not judge them but seek to understand how their culture influenced how they received and responded to God's message. A lack of knowledge about biblical cultures can cause us to miss important nuances in the author's word choices.

3. Discuss Mark 6:30–56. Much of Israel’s culture centered on shepherding. (See pg. 92–94)
 - a. How familiar are you with the shepherding culture, particularly the ancient Hebrew shepherding culture?
 - b. What might we overlook in Jesus’s message if we don’t consider their local culture?
 - c. How did Jesus’s choice of words and actions reflect Israel’s local culture, including shepherding and “seeing ghosts”? How did Jesus’s and Mark’s word choices help the people (and us) better understand Christ’s character and trust Him more? (See pg. 95–96.)

Day 3—Doctrine

Doctrine is the Bible’s teachings that direct how we’re to think and live like Christ. No matter how well-intentioned we may be, the whole Bible, and the Bible alone, must shape our doctrine.

Ignorance of the Bible’s doctrines is cured by studying the Bible—the whole Bible.

Unbelief in the Bible’s doctrines is cured by dying to our pride, to thinking we know better than God what biblical doctrine should or should not be.

The scribes and Pharisees added to God’s Word to protect the people from disobedience. The guardrails they added around Scripture displayed their unbelief in the sufficiency of God’s Word to do its perfect work in the people’s hearts.

God’s Word is our perfect guardrail to keep us safe from every false teaching. Know the Word. Know the Word. Know the Word.

4. In Mark 7:1–37, Jesus confronts the religious leaders because of the many rules and traditions they added to God’s Word (like guardrails) designed to protect God’s people from straying into disobedience to God’s law (see pg. 100).
 - a. Why did Jesus rebuke the religious leaders for their added rules and traditions?
 - b. How did the elder’s additions to Scripture display their unbelief in the sufficiency of God’s Word to do its perfect work in the people’s hearts?
 - c. Describe ways we add our own forms of guardrails to protect ourselves or loved ones from dishonoring God or His Word? How does this expose our own doubt or unbelief in the sufficiency of God’s Word?
 - d. In what ways have you seen God’s Word do a powerful work in your or another’s heart?
 - e. If it feels like God’s Word isn’t transforming you, what do you think you should do? Discuss ideas based on Scripture to encourage those who feel God’s Word seems effective in others, but not in them.
5. Read Mark 7:6–7. Jesus quoted the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. His words spoke of the false teachers in Isaiah’s days, Jesus’s day, and also in our world today.

- a. How would you rate your confidence level in being able to spot whether a teaching you hear is true biblical doctrine or the opinion of the speaker?
- b. If you didn't know if a particular teaching was biblical, what steps could you take to determine whether the teaching is true or false?

Day 4—Structure

Writing, like buildings, has structure. Since God is a God of order (1 Corinthians 14:33), we can be certain He gave the Bible a well-ordered structure to lead us to the truths He wants us to know. This fact doesn't mean, though, we'll always recognize or understand the structure at first. Whenever a book or passage seems unstructured or random, it's a clue that either the author is using the seeming randomness to grab our attention, or we're so off the intended path that we need to follow breadcrumbs back and find the intended structure.

6. Review the questions on pg. 108 that help us find the author's structure. Did any of these structures surprise you? If so, how?
7. Review the chart on pg. 109. Through two series of similar events, Jesus mercifully and repeatedly showed His disciples the way they must walk if they were to one day shepherd His flock (the church) with humble compassion rather than Pharisaical pride. If we don't learn to follow Christ in faith and humility like His faithful disciples, we'll follow the path that leads to destruction and shame. The disciples had Jesus to lead them. We have His well-structured Word and the Holy Spirit as our wise and merciful guides.
 - a. When you read through the whole book of Mark at the beginning of the study, how many of these repetitions and similarities in the series of events did you notice?
 - b. Discuss how seeing the organized structure Jesus orchestrated (and Mark recorded) help you better recognize Christ's intentionality in all He does?

Day 5—Turning Points

Turning points or hinges are a type of structure the biblical authors use to emphasize spiritual truth and move the reader to a specific response. Each book tends to have one or more major turning points—hinges that change everything.

8. Discuss how we can recognize literary structures like hinges and turning points in a book of the Bible (see pg. 108, 113–114).
 - a. Discuss why Mark 8:29 is considered the hinge in the gospel of Mark. (See pg. 117)
 - b. What is the hinge in a Christian's life—the greatest turning point in which a person's life is forever changed, and Christ flips the script on their life.
 - c. How has your life changed forever since your salvation?
 - d. If you're not yet a Christian, how will you respond to Christ's call in Mark 1:15 to "repent and believe?"

Attributes of God

Share any attributes of God you added to your list on page 221. Which attributes show up most often?

Prayer Time

Praise God for His attributes and pray for Him to lead you up the path of humility and far from the destructive path of pride. Pray for any needs or struggles shared during the meeting.

Exchange prayer requests with someone in your group and commit to pray for each other during the week.

Week 4

Ears to Hear

Mark 9:1–10:52

Transformational Truths

Which of these Transformational Truths stood out and why?

- Day 1** — Listen to Jesus from Genesis to Revelation. Follow Him from the cross to radiant glory.
- Day 2** — Effective prayer says, “I can’t, Father, but You can. Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.”
- Day 3** — Jesus grounds our feet in the truth, and His gospel of grace, mercy, and love sends our hearts and minds into the heights of heaven.
- Day 4** — Once upon an always, there was, is, and forever will be our loving, gracious, and holy Savior.
- Day 5** — Every need of the heart, every longing of our soul, finds its fulfillment in Jesus.

Bible Study Principles

Which of these Bible study principles stood out and why?

Day 1

- ✓ God structured His Word to be interdependent—each Testament explains the other.
- ✓ The Old and New bring ah-ha! clarity to each other and to our understanding of the whole Bible and the full counsel of God’s will, purposes, and plans.

Day 2

- ✓ It’s easier than we realize to slip unaware from a prayer-dependent and Holy Spirit–led life into self-dependency.
- ✓ Effective prayer prays for more faith in the One who calls us and is faithful. He will do it.

Day 3

- ✓ Poetry brings a message to life in memorable and often vivid words and images.
- ✓ To interpret poetic passages, we want to experience the image, recognize the relationship, feel the emotion, and follow the logic.

Day 4

- ✓ When you study the narrative genre, immerse yourself in the characters, setting, and plot with its rising conflict, climax, and resolution.
- ✓ When you study the law genre, remember God designed all His covenants and commands (the ceremonial, moral, and civil laws) to teach us about Christ and drive us to Him.

Day 5

- ✓ God never asks questions for His benefit. He already knows everything.
- ✓ Whenever you come across one of God’s questions, stop and study it. Consider what His question reveals about Himself or about the person He’s questioning? What does He want them—and us—to realize, confess, or ponder?

Memory Verse: Mark 9:7

- Recite this week's verse from memory as a group.
- Hebrews 1:1–2:1 tells us that God spoke to His people in Old Testament times by the prophets. But now He speaks to us by His Son. He speaks by His Spirit through Christ—through His words and teachings in the Bible. “Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (Hebrews 2:1).
 - Describe what it looks like to truly listen to Jesus today.
 - What are some red flags that warn us we may not be listening to Jesus in this moment—that we may be drifting away from what He taught?

Recap and Discussion Questions

Day 1—God's Unfolding Plan

The old adage “Out with the old and in with the new!” doesn't work with the Old and New Testaments. If we toss out either, we've lost the fullness of the story. We're left with only partial understanding. God structured His Word to be interdependent—each Testament explains the other.

Whenever someone first reads the whole Bible, they'll likely feel lost in sections; it's like putting a puzzle together without the picture on the box. Jesus is the picture. With continued study and time, the puzzle of the Bible comes together in our minds, and God's unfolding story and picture of Christ rises clearer off Scripture's pages. We can't put the whole picture of any book of the Bible together without pieces from both Testaments. Mark's gospel tells a complete and glorious story, but only when we fit it together with events from the Old Testament can we truly understand it.

When Christ finally returns, and we see the end of the story and fulfillment of all His Word, everything will happen exactly as He planned. There'll be no surprises for the Author. We, however, will be amazed, for “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

1. What insights did you gain from reading the Old Testament passages on pg. 124 that helped you better understand Mark 9:1–13?

Day 2—Pray

Of all the skills we learn and forget, prayer should never make this list. Prayer isn't like water wings or arm floaties. It's not something we use until we know how to swim on our own.

Effective prayer acknowledges we could never swim at all without God's power. It says, “I can't, Father, but You can.” Prayer is the natural outpouring of this acknowledgement.

Effective prayer doesn't pray for more faith in our ability to do what God calls us to do. It prays for more faith in the One who calls us and is faithful. He will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

The difference between effective and ineffective prayer is the faith with which it's prayed. Faith placed in Christ has power. All other faith sinks us.

Let's guard ourselves from ever thinking, whether in life or in Bible study, that we're so teamed up with the Lord that we can now swim on our own—or swim off “in His name.” Because, as He told His apostles, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

2. Consider the disciples' conundrum in Mark 9:14–29 (See pg. 128). Back in Mark 6:7–13, Christ had empowered them to cast out demons (they enjoyed great success), but with this demon-possessed boy, they were powerless. Discuss your answers to the questions on pg. 130.
3. What does it look like for us to faithfully pray for everything without unconsciously turning our prayers into a sort of “good luck charm” or a way of “forcing” God’s hand. We never want to be guilty of suggesting to God that He’s obligated to us—after all, He told us to pray, and we did.

Day 3—Poetry

Poetry fills more lines in the Bible than any other biblical genre except narrative. If you’re not a poetry lover, be encouraged. Hebrew poetry is not “Roses are red, violets are blue.” Nor is it the dark rantings of a tortured poet in a smokey lounge.

The Bible’s poetry is like the gentle cadence of ocean waves that mesmerize and draw us in and the crackle of fireworks that ignite our senses. One poetic line packed with meaning makes us ponder truth we might have quickly forgotten but will now remember forever.

4. In Mark 9:35, Jesus used poetry to call His disciples (and us) to follow His example and serve rather than seek to be served. Using the four tips on pg. 134 and the techniques on pg. 135, work together to interpret Jesus’s meaning in v. 37 (parallelism), v. 40 (paradox), and/or vv. 42–47 (hyperbole).
5. When Jesus told His disciples exactly what would happen to Him in Mark 9:30, He spoke with clear words, but they didn’t understand His meaning. There was much they didn’t understand, including how Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, came not to be served, but to serve. The ways of the world and our sin nature battle the ways of Christ and His gospel of grace, mercy, and love.
 - a. Discuss how Jesus’s teachings in Mark 9 oppose the world’s teachings.
 - b. What other teachings in the Bible can you think of that conflict with Christ’s?

Day 4—Narrative and Law

The power of story comes from its ability to make us feel emotions and form lifelike connections with the characters.

Law fills us with emotions, too.

Sometimes we feel relief. No one is allowed to hurt me.

Other times we’re afraid. I’m in trouble now.

Or annoyed. Don’t tell me what to do.

Our problem with law isn’t the law. Our problem is with our heart—it’s impossibly emotional, fickle, and ruled by sin. But Christ is our certain cure. This is the story of the law of love the Bible tells—the overwhelming story of our salvation that though God’s law condemns us, Christ’s love saves us.

Narrative is the genre of storytelling. When we study narrative, we immerse ourselves in the characters, setting, and plot with its rising conflict, climax, and resolution. The more we live the story (at least in our imagination), the more we understand it and its main point or theme.

Narratives are typically literal, not figurative. They mean what they say and say what they mean. The context reveals whether the author is using literal or figurative language.

In order to understand the **law** genre, it's vital that we grasp the two-fold overarching purpose of the Mosaic law—to be a tutor and guardian.

Tutor. The law awakened Israel's awareness of sin. They needed to learn they could never perfectly keep the law and thus needed a Savior. Their continual failure to keep the law proved their need. (We also prove our need.)

Guardian. The original word for guardian in the Greek referred to a tutor who was tasked with training the son in more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. He also educated him in life and ethics. The law kept God's people safe, trained them in the truth, and pointed them to Christ.

Whether through narrative or the law, the truth remains the same. In perfect love, Christ gave His life on the cross to purchase the freedom of His Bride, the church. He satisfies our deepest desires, lifts the last to first, and makes us His beloved bride.

6. How did the Pharisees, the disciples, and the rich young ruler respond to God's law and love? How did their responses expose the true condition of their hearts? (See pg. 142.)
7. What are you tempted to love more than God? Comfort? Success? Beauty? Your children or spouse?
8. How do Jesus's words in Mark 10:27 erase our fears about our ability to be faithful to Him and our unbelieving loved one's ability to be saved?
9. Share what it looks like in your life to believe Mark 10:31. In what way does this verse encourage, convict, or scare you?

Day 5—Questions

Do you know who asked the first question in the Bible?

The serpent. He asked Eve, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1).

The Bible's first recorded question was the evil planting of a seed of doubt about God.

The next question was the Lord calling to His fallen children: "Where are you?" (v. 9).

Between the moment Adam and Eve rebelled and God proclaimed the gospel in Genesis 3:15, every word God spoke was a question. The question we might ask now is why an all-knowing God would ever need to ask a question.

I know I'm stating the obvious, but God is not like us. He never needs new information. He's not even curious because He knows everything. He's intentional in all He does, including asking questions—rhetorical and direct questions like, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Whenever we come across one of God's questions, stop and study it. What does His question reveal about himself or about the person He's questioning? What does He want them (and us) to realize, confess, or ponder?

10. Read Mark 10:45. Why do you think scholars consider this verse the climax and the lens through which we can understand all of Mark? This verse isn't the hinge verse when everything changed, but rather the heartbeat of the gospel of Mark. (See pg. 148.)

11. If Jesus asked you today what you want Him to do for you, what would you say?

Attributes of God

Share any attributes of God you added to your list on page 221. Which is your favorite and why?

Prayer Time

Read Revelation 5:9–10 to start your prayer time. Then praise God for some of the truths you've learned about Christ through the gospel of Mark and pray for any needs or struggles shared during the meeting.

Exchange prayer requests with someone and commit to pray for each other during the week.

Week 5

Behold Your King!

Mark 11:1–13:37

Transformational Truths

Which of the Transformational Truths stood out to you and why?

Day 1 — When we behold our King, our King's glory holds our hearts.

Day 2 — Christ makes all who trust in Him abound in fruit in every season. And in every season, God is making us more like the image of Christ.

Day 3 — In Christ, God loves us anyway.

Day 4 — Seek to be right. Always be humble.

Day 5 — Be on guard. Stay awake. But let Satan tremble, not you. You have Christ and all His promises.

Bible Study Principles

Which of the Bible Study Principles stood out to you and why?

Day 1

- ✓ Possibly the most important principle we'll ever learn for studying the Bible is to behold our King.
- ✓ The Bible is all about Christ and His salvation for God's glory.

Day 2

- ✓ Throughout the Bible, God created snapshots—types, patterns, illustrations, shadows, and the like—to teach important spiritual truths, particularly about Christ and His kingdom.
- ✓ Avoid over-spiritualizing Scripture. Don't assign symbolic meaning to every object, number, event, person, and so on in the Bible.

Day 3

- ✓ The epistles are letters much like a letter from a loving father to encourage and instruct his children with what Christ has done and how we should respond.
- ✓ Find and follow the logic of the epistles to their intended conclusion.

Day 4

- ✓ Every text of Scripture has one correct interpretation—God's—and almost endless ways to rightly respond to it.
- ✓ Humility is vital when interpreting the Bible.

Day 5

- ✓ Prophecy *forthtells* and *foretells*.
- ✓ Apocalyptic literature reveals hidden mysteries through figurative language.
- ✓ Visionary genres often use storytelling techniques with setting, characters, and action—but no plot—and are more concerned with the message than with chronology.
- ✓ Keep the text in its full context.
- ✓ Assume the author meant what he said, unless the context makes it clear he's using symbolism or figurative language.

Memory Verse: Proverbs 9:10

- Review this week's memory verse from memory.
- How does a proper fear of the Lord set us on the path to wisdom and coming to know the Holy One and His character, nature, and ways give us insight?

Recap and Discussion Questions

Day 1—Behold Your King!

Possibly the most important principle we'll ever learn for studying the Bible is to behold our King. To keep our eyes on the Lord.

If we truly behold Christ in His Word with eyes of faith, we'll follow Him and His commands with more and more of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Our lives will be a rewarding adventure with our Lord, regardless of the many trials we endure. Eternal rewards wait for us in heaven—rewards beyond anything our minds could imagine on earth.

The Jews thought they knew what their Messiah would be like when He came—a warrior who'd destroy their political enemies.

The gentiles thought they knew how to find salvation—by pleasing their myriad of false gods.

How easy it is for us to make God into a king of our own imagination. We envision Him as a king who'd never allow His children to suffer or ask us to forsake our dreams for His will—as if His will is bad. Or we imagine Him as a severe God who's never truly pleased with us.

No wonder so many of us are like unbroken donkeys who don't fully trust their Creator. The God we've created in our minds looks a lot like us. But if we come to God's Word and truly behold our King, we'll see Him as He truly is—and we'll be like Jesus's trusting colt. We'll yield to Him and trust Him.

When we truly behold our King, abiding peace and joy will rule our hearts and minds.

1. Discuss the truths you noted in your T-chart about Jesus as God revealed Him in Mark 11:1–11. (See pg. 157.)
2. The gospel of Luke records how the Pharisees opposed Jesus when He entered Jerusalem and how Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:39–44). When Mark recorded this event, he left those details out (Mark 11:1–11). What did Mark focus us on instead? (See pg. 158.)

Day 2—Types, Patterns, Illustrations

The Bible is a verbal and visual masterpiece. After God spoke the gospel to Adam and Eve, He gave them a snapshot of the gospel. He took an innocent animal (could it have been a lamb?) and clothed Adam and Eve in its skin as a picture of the garments of salvation and a robe of

Christ's righteousness (Isaiah 61:10).

In Romans 5:14, God declared Adam a type of Jesus Christ (or depending on your Bible translation, a pattern, symbol, representation, figure, or prototype).

Throughout the Bible, God created vivid snapshots that displayed spiritual truths, particularly about Christ and His kingdom. Old Testament individuals such as Adam, and objects such as the temple, and every aspect of the sacrificial system foreshadowed New Testament fulfillments of Christ.

As we study Scripture, we want to be careful not to over spiritualize what we read by assigning symbolic meaning to every object, number, event, person, and so on in the Bible. As our understanding of Scripture grows, we'll find it easier to recognize actual types and symbols. Until then, it's helpful to confirm our interpretation by consulting a few commentaries to see how Christ's church has historically interpreted the passage.

3. Discuss your answers to the questions about the fig tree in Mark 11:12–25 (pg. 164).
4. How did your T-chart on pg. 165 help you interpret Jesus's parable of the vineyard owner in Mark 11:27–12:12. (If needed, refer to the tips you learned about interpreting parables on pg. 62.)
5. If someone could capture a photograph of what it looks like to trust Christ, how much would the snapshot resemble you? What needs to change for you to look more like Christ?
Don't be discouraged if you don't like your snapshot. God has promised He's making you into the image of Christ. He's faithful. He will surely do it. (Romans 8:29, Philippians 1:6, 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:24)

Day 3—Epistles

God created the letter-writing tradition and left us with twenty-one epistles—twenty-one letters of love from Him written through the hands of faithful men. These men wrote out of deep emotion, like fathers who want their words to touch their children's hearts, effect change, and remind them of their heavenly Father's love.

6. Do you have a letter you treasure above all others? Share what makes it special.
7. Review the tips for interpreting epistles on pg. 169–170.
8. In Mark 12:18–27, the Sadducees came to Jesus with a seemingly sincere question, but in truth, they'd schemed together to entrap Jesus by His words using His Word—using Scripture. They approached Jesus as if they were the authorities on Scripture. How does Jesus's response in verse 24 speaks to every person in every generation?
9. Considering Jesus's words in verse 24, how does our ability to possess a copy of God's Word (multiple copies even) remove our excuses and fill you with great hope? What are you going to do about it?

Day 4—Interpretation and Response

Have you ever read something you wrote, but then when you read it again you have no idea what you meant? You struggle to interpret your own writing? I've had this experience many times. God never has.

I may not be able to interpret my own writing all the time, but God always knows what He meant by what He said. Our job is to discover what God means, not dictate His one true meaning—or what we think He should mean according to current cultural sensitivities.

Once we've discerned, to the best of our ability, what God means, we must respond. The possibilities of how we can rightly respond to the correct interpretation are as individual as we are.

Recognize that God's interpretation of the text is always the right interpretation. We do our best to discern His meaning by keeping the text in its context and following the logic. But in the end, we could still be wrong. Seek to be right. Always be humble.

Recognize that while there's only one right interpretation, the one God intends, there are numerous ways to respond to it. Many passages in the Bible have no impact on our salvation no matter how we interpret the verses, but when salvation is on the line, we must get it right—with humility.

10. Mark 12:41–44 has been interpreted at least two different ways by brilliant scholars.

- a. Which interpretation did you choose on pg. 180 and why?
- b. Discuss how we can hold to our interpretation with humility rather than prideful belligerence.

Day 5—Visionary Genre

Want to know what Satan fears?

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

—Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

Prophecy both forthtells and foretells.

Apocalyptic literature (from the Greek word that means “an uncovering”) reveals hidden mysteries through figurative language.

When God's people needed a message of warning or encouragement, God's authors used prophecy to forthtell His message.

When they needed to know what would happen in the fullness of time, His authors foretold the future through prophecy and apocalyptic literature.

Through the visionary genres, God proclaims and displays Satan's doom in living color and torrid detail. Even greater, God displays the greatness of His own majesty and declares the magnitude of His works with poetic beauty and power. He calls His people to their knees in holy fear and repentance and to greater heights of faith and hope in His mercy, love, and faithfulness.

11. How confident do you feel in your ability to properly interpret prophetic passages, particularly apocalyptic literature? Use the four starter points on pg. 184 and your notes you made on your T-chart on pg. 185 to discuss the meaning of Mark 13:3–37.
12. While much of Christ's message is mysterious, Jesus clearly repeated a phrase in Mark 13:9, 23, and 33, and another in vv. 33, 34, 35, and 37. What did Jesus want them (and us) to do while we wait for His return? (See pg. 186.)

Attributes of God

Share any attributes of God you added to your list on page 221. Do you have on this list that He's eternal—without beginning or end?

Prayer Time

Praise God for His glorious attributes and that we will live forever with Him in the new heavens and new earth one day. Rejoice together over His first coming and that He's coming again. Ask Him to help you stay awake and be on guard while you wait and serve those around you. Pray also for any needs or struggles shared during the meeting.

Exchange prayer requests with another person in the group and commit to pray for each other during the week.

NOTE: Consider closing this meeting by singing Martin Luther's hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*.

Week 6

Follow Your King

Mark 14:1–16:8

Transformational Truths

Which of the Transformational Truths stood out and why?

Day 1 — A life “wasted” for Christ is a fragrant aroma to the Lord.

Day 2 — Study and pray, then rise and obey.

Day 3 — Our trials expose and refine what we truly believe about Jesus.

Day 4 — God uses the whole Bible to build in us a whole faith.

Day 5 — The choices we make today affect our faith tomorrow.

Bible Study Principles

Which of the Bible Study Principles stood out and why?

Day 1

- ✓ The church is essential in the Christian life. She’s God’s design for all believers. Wholeheartedly join and serve your fellow members.
- ✓ Through our church, we come together to devote ourselves to the Bible’s teaching, to fellowship, to the Lord’s Supper, and to prayer (Acts 2:42).
- ✓ Delight to “waste” yourself in reading and studying God’s Word, serving His church, and ministering with the gospel in the world.

Day 2

- ✓ You won’t always interpret God’s Word correctly. Continue to seek the truth and trust the Holy Spirit to teach and correct you.
- ✓ All God’s Word will be fulfilled just as it was written.

Day 3

- ✓ Part of effective Bible study is checking to see how we’re responding in life to the truth we’re learning as we study.
- ✓ We need to check our level of three faith issues: knowledge, belief, and rebellion.
 1. Knowledge. There’s something about God we don’t yet fully (or correctly) understand that would settle our emotions in Him.
 2. Belief. We know the truth that defeats our troubled emotions, but we struggle to truly believe—at least in this moment.
 3. Rebellion. We know the truth, but we don’t like it because we want what we want.

Day 4

- ✓ Read the Bible widely and study it deeply.
- ✓ Studying adds depth, which makes our reading more transformational. Reading adds breadth, which makes our studying more transformational.
- ✓ Our efforts don’t transform us. God’s Word does. Invest in your faith by investing time in God’s Word.

Day 5

- ✓ Stoke your fervency to know the Lord on every page of the Bible. And respond.
- ✓ Live out what God has worked into you through His Word.
- ✓ Go in the truth of God's Word, and never give up.

Memory Verse: John 17:17

- Recite this week's verse from memory as a group.
- Discuss what it means to be sanctified by the truth.

Recap and Discussion Questions

Day 1—Christ's Love and His Church

Christ calls the church His bride and His family (Revelation 21:9, Mark 3:35). He trained His disciples for three years to prepare them to establish and build His church. Christ's love for His bride, the church, is the purest of loves—and it's the love He's called us to share with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The church is God's design for all believers. She's essential. Christ died for her.

What does the church have to do with effective Bible study? Everything. Christ gave us the church to equip us, build us up in love, and mature us in knowing and reflecting Him and serving Him and His people (Ephesians 4:11–16).

Part of the church's work is to help its members understand Scripture. When we combine personal Bible study with weekly expository (verse-by-verse) preaching and mutual encouragement through fellowship, our understanding of God and His Word can flourish and our love for Christ grow.

1. When you described your church in one sentence on pg. 191, how did you describe it? Did you mention love or family?
2. Serving Christ seems the most obvious desire a Christian would have, but when it comes down to sacrifice, whether it's time, \$50,000 worth of oil, or our lives, the sacrifice tests the depth and purity of our love. How did you answer the question on pg. 193 about pouring out what's most costly even onto Jesus?

Day 2—Fruitfulness

Jesus looked at His disciples. "One of you will betray me."

Imagine the flood of emotions that crashed against the disciples. Surely they thought, "We've left everything to follow you, Jesus. Why would any of us betray You?"

Whatever concerns Judas may have had, they weren't enough to halt his plan. But his evil scheme served only to advance God's redemptive purpose. God's Word will be accomplished.

So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

(Isaiah 55:11)

What God has written will be accomplished. None of His promises will fail.

If you belong to Christ, you *will* grow in the love and understanding of God’s Word (Psalm 119:103, 1 Peter 2:2–3).

Why not choose now to study God’s Word and know what is written rather than wait for God to bring you to your knees in surrender?

You *will* follow Christ’s footsteps and become like Him (Romans 8:29).

Why not choose now to fix your eyes on Him, pick up your cross, and follow Him rather than pitch your cross and flee?

God *will* give you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him (Philippians 2:13).

It’s only a matter of time. Why not now?

Rise, let us go.

3. What is the central theme of Mark 14:12–42?
4. How does everything build up to and off of the theme verses—vv. 22–25? (See pg. 199.)
5. Consider the anguish Jesus endured as He prayed in the garden for God’s will. Discuss your thoughts about the following statement from pg. 200 and how Jesus’s example convicts *and* encourages your faith.

When the time appointed in eternity past arrived, Jesus wiped away the sweat, went to His sleeping disciples, and said, “Rise, let us go. See, My betrayer is approaching!” (Mark 14:42 BSB).

Day 3—Belief

Part of effective Bible study is checking to see how we’re responding in life to the truth we’re learning as we study. Whenever we respond to circumstances with anxiety, anger, or any of their emotional cousins rather than confident faith, God uses our troubling reaction as a flashing “check faith” alert. When our check faith alert signals in our heart, we need to check the level of one or more of three faith issues.

6. Discuss the three faith issues we all face as we learn to follow Christ—Knowledge, Belief, and Rebellion.
7. How do these issues present themselves in the actions of the individuals mentioned in Mark 14:53–72. (See pgs. 203–206)?

Day 4—Wholeness

Guess how many verses in the Bible help explain today’s passage.

At least five hundred. (You read that right: 500.)

Does this vast number help you grasp the value of reading the whole Bible?

Reading gives us a breadth of knowledge that makes our studying more transformational.

Studying gives us a depth of knowledge that makes our reading more transformational.

It’s a beautiful symbiotic relationship.

As we read, we see the full picture of the Bible. We see the forest.

As we study, we see the individual trees and make deeper connections from one end of the Bible to the other.

Reading *and* studying both informs and transforms. God uses the whole Bible to build in us a whole faith. Understand, though, that our efforts are not what transform us. God’s Word does. Invest in your faith by investing time in God’s Word.

8. Discuss your challenges with being faithful to read *and* study the Bible.
 - a. Do you tend to read devotionals more than the Bible? They typically encourage us in God’s Word, but they aren’t the Bible.
 - b. Which do you struggle with more? Stopping to study everything you read in the Bible and thus reading through the Bible slowly or never stopping to study, only read?
 - c. What tips can you share to help manage the balance between reading and studying?

9. I remember how confused I used to be over Jesus’s cry on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). I was discouraged to think that Jesus displayed doubts in and disappointment with God. I was relieved to learn Jesus was quoting Psalm 22:1, not doubting God or forgetting why He was hanging on the cross.
 - a. Why did Jesus quote Psalm 22:1?
 - b. Discuss how a right understanding of Jesus’s cry strengthens our faith and removes our doubts rather than excuses them. (See pg. 212.)

Day 5—Read, Study, and Live It Out

By the time Mark wrote his gospel, persecution in Rome had intensified. Peter had likely already been crucified upside down for his faith. Mark wrote to strengthen Christ’s battered church.

Like Joseph of Arimathea, who ignored the consequences he might suffer for honoring Jesus’s dead body, Mark disregarded the risk to his life to record and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mark recorded the whole truth even though it meant including the inadmissible and “unacceptable” testimony of women to Jesus’s resurrection.

10. Search your heart. What might you have done in each situation?
 - Leave Jesus’s body to be tossed in a grave with criminals?
 - Play it safe, and walk away from following Christ?
 - Water down the truth to make God’s Word more acceptable to more people?

Every day we make choices. The choices you make today affect your faith tomorrow.
Choose to read and study the Bible. But don’t just read it. Go, and live it out.

Attributes of God

Add to your list of the attributes of God on page 221. Memorize it. Remind yourself of it often. And proclaim it to the world.

Prayer Time

For your final time of prayer together, read aloud the section titled “Go” on pgs. 215–216. Pray for God to continue the work in you that He’s begun through Mark. And pray for any needs or struggles shared during the meeting. Remember to exchange prayer requests with another.