

THE GOSPEL OF
MARK

'SON OF GOD, SERVANT OF ALL'

FALL 2013 CORE STUDIES

THE VISION FOR CORE

CORE is a place where students can grow in their relationship with Jesus and journey together in seeking to be more like Him. That's why it's called CORE, because it's central to who we are becoming. Our vision is that there would be CORE groups in every corner of campus pursuing spiritual growth and transformation in community with one another.

CORE COMPONENTS

Every CORE is made up of a unique small group of students, and consequently every CORE will be different and have it's own identity. At the same time, CORES are committed to 5 core values that that keep us balanced and on track as we follow Jesus: **discipleship, fellowship, prayer, outreach, and worship.**

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

First semester is a critical time for forming authentic and spiritually transformative CORE groups. Every fall semester we choose a book of the Bible that all the CORES study. This semester your UCM Staff have prepared 11 CORE studies on the Gospel of Mark. **You don't need to get through all of them by semesters end.** You can continue to move through the studies in the winter semester. It's easy to fall into a routine of only studying scripture together every week and closing in prayer. But remember: this isn't just a bible study, this is CORE!

The following schedule is an example of how to plan to incorporate the five core values of discipleship, fellowship, prayer, outreach, and worship into your CORE:

WEEK	DATE	CORE FOCUS
1	Sept 16-20	Welcome / Share the CORE vision / Study #1
2	Sept 23-27	CORE Leader Testimonies / Study #2
3	Sept 30-Oct 4	Testimonies / Study #3
4	Oct 7-11	Community Building Activity (Dinner/Sports/etc)
5	*Oct 14-18	Testimonies / Study #4
6	Oct 21-25	Testimonies / Study #5
7	Oct 28-Nov 1	CORE Date
8	Nov 4-8	Testimonies / Study #6
9	*Nov 11-15	CORE Outreach
10	Nov 18-22	Prayer Focus / Study #7
11	Nov 25-29	Worship Focus / CORE Video

*weeks where Monday is a holiday

PLANNING YOUR CORE SCHEDULE

These first 11 weeks will go by fast so sit down with your co-leader, take time to pray, and discuss the vision you have for your CORE and schedule it out. Use this calendar to roughly plan your semester of CORE meetings:

WEEK	DATE	CORE FOCUS	STUDY #
1	Sept 16-20		1
2	Sept 23-27		
3	Sept 30-Oct 4		
4	Oct 7-11		
5	*Oct 14-18		
6	Oct 21-25		
7	Oct 28-Nov 1		
8	Nov 4-8		
9	*Nov 11-15		
10	Nov 18-22		
11	Nov 25-29		

ESSENTIAL PRACTICES IN CORE

Over the years students have found the following practices and experiences to be an essential part of a CORE:

- Reading and studying scripture together with the purpose of personal and communal application.
- Authentically getting to know one another by sharing our personal stories and testimonies of coming to follow Jesus.
- Challenging one another and keeping each other accountable in our walks of faith and obedience to Jesus.
- Serving or planning an outreach project to do together each term (e.g. dorm outreach, or serving at a mission downtown).
- Praying for one another, relationships in dorm, and for the campus.
- Incorporating time and space for worship.
- Connecting with another guys/girls CORE (e.g. a "CORE Date").

5 PRACTICAL IDEAS

1. Make time in your CORE meetings for each person in your CORE to share their testimony/story. (1-2 people each week depending on the size of your CORE).
2. Take time to pray for the person right after they share their testimony/story.
3. Book one night early on in the semester to do a community building activity together (e.g. eating dinner together, playing sports, or a game that allows getting to know each other.)
4. Plan to have one or two CORES where there is space to worship together (e.g. through music or time of silent contemplation) or to have an extended time in prayer for one another (e.g. laying on hands and praying for anointing in mission and our callings).
5. Meet somewhere accessible in a dorm and pray about practical ways to purposefully engage your dorm or neighborhood.

READING STORY BY STORY

Mark is a great book to be reading throughout the week, story by story. The best way for your CORE members to engage the text during the meeting is if they have been reading the context throughout the week. Encourage this by modeling it yourself.

CORE STUDY STRUCTURE

This year we have designed the studies for two levels: “Foundations” and “Going Deeper”

1. FOUNDATIONS STUDY

- Obtaining a basic understanding.
- Includes questions that address the foundational elements of the passage.
- Do not be shy of rewording these questions for your particular CORE or choosing the questions that you feel are more appropriate for your CORE members.

2. GOING DEEPER STUDY

- For those who want to dig below the surface. You can use this in CORE, or pass it to your CORE members to read through the week before the study.
- Includes questions that go into more depth. More background information is provided for each question to help you facilitate the discussion at a deeper level.

BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

** It would be a good idea to incorporate some of this information into your first CORE study. It is important that people have a grasp of these facts before reading Mark.*

AUTHOR - John Mark, son of Mary (Acts 12:12); cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10); Peter's assistant in Rome (Acts 13:5); son of a wealthy family in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12-14).

DATE - Late AD 50s; written in Rome

AUDIENCE - Gentiles (non-Jews); Mark obtained the information about Jesus from the apostle Peter.

LITERARY GENRE - Unconnected narrative, parable.

STYLE - Fast-moving, action-packed, using the simplest Greek.

PURPOSE - To tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Mark is concerned to record a description of who Jesus was and the impact he had on those who came in contact with him. Mark realized Jesus' identity-he was the Son of God-and he wanted to make this point as the story of Jesus unfolded.¹

JESUS SEEN AS - Son of man who suffers for us; Son of God who overcomes evil; promised Messiah; teacher (rabbi).

THEMES - The supernatural nature of Jesus; the death and resurrection of Jesus; the ministry of Jesus as servant.

Mark is the John Mark mentioned in Acts (12:12, 25, 13:13). He belonged to a founding family of the Christian Church. In Acts 12 we are told that the church gathered in the house of Mark's mother (Mary) to pray for Peter. The house was an important centre in the life of the early church. After being miraculously released from prison, Peter returned to the house assuming he would find the church gathered there. Mark's family must have been wealthy to afford a large house with servants (Rhoda, who left Peter at the doorstep). Mark's cousin Barnabas, was a property owner (Acts 4:37).

We do not know how much of Jesus' ministry Mark witnessed first hand, but he must have witnessed Jesus' final days before his crucifixion. The significance of Jesus' crucifixion obviously impacted Mark. Half of his gospel, chapter 8 verse 31 to chapter 16 point to Jerusalem and Jesus' death. Mark was close to Peter and church tradition tells us that he was in Rome at the time of Peter's martyrdom under Emperor Nero (AD 65). Nero was a cruel leader. Nero blamed Christians for the fire of Rome, which many at the time blamed on Nero himself. Roman soldiers were reported to have prevented people from putting out the flames that eventually burned the city to the ground. Nero was then free to build his lavish palace and gardens right in the centre of Rome. It is likely that Peter was martyred during the persecution that followed. Mark likely wrote this gospel as Peter related his experiences with Jesus to Mark. Peter's life was about to end and it was important that firsthand witnesses record the sayings of Jesus for future generations.

Many of the events of the gospel centre around Peter, which would be natural if it was Peter who relayed the information on to Mark.

¹ Elwell, Walter A., and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998. Print. pg. 90

- Takes place at Peter's house (1:29-32, 2:1-11)
- 'Simon and those with him' (1:35-49)
- Peter and the others are rebuked by Jesus (4:13)
- 'Go and tell his disciples and Peter' (16:7)

Mark's gospel is very honest in recording the failures of Peter and the other disciples. The disciples are shown to be wrong, afraid, and slow in their understanding.

- the disciples are rebuked (4:40)
- 'are you all so dull' (7:18)
- Peter looks very foolish (9:5-6)

Mark's gospel moves quickly in comparison to the other gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry. Mark uses the Greek word 'euthus' 41 times. It is translated as 'immediately' / 'just then' / 'straightaway' / 'without delay' / 'at once'. Mark records Jesus' Aramaic words (5:41). Aramaic was one of the languages spoken in Palestine in the early first century and most likely the language of Jesus and his disciples. This fact points to Mark as being a Palestinian Jew

The gospel reaches its climax in 8:29 at Peter's confession to Jesus' question: 'Who do you say I am,' 'You are the Messiah' The first 8 chapters have led the reader to this point: Jesus heals, calms the storm, forgives sin. Who is he? The next 8 chapters explain what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah (8:31 ff).

An important characteristic in the gospel is the 'Messianic Secret.' Jesus reveals himself and yet hides himself. In order for Jesus to move around freely in a very politically volatile region he had to be careful that his true identity not be known too soon. He was the King of the Jews, the promised Messiah, God incarnate, but he had come as a servant to die on a cross as a common criminal, not to lead a revolution against Israel's earthly enemies. Jesus' need to hide his identity then must not be misunderstood now as a reason for our not identifying with Him publicly or failing to tell others about him.

**For more information on this passage refer to a good commentary: N.T. Wright, "Mark for Everyone."*